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ABSTRACT

For women, the corporate world of education should offer a natural field for professional advancement, but frequently this is not the case. Some of the reasons behind this situation and what women can do to advance in leadership roles in education are explored in this text. Chapter 2 examines the corporate world of education and the dramatic differences between this domain and the world of business. Chapter 3 suggests that teachers look carefully at whether they want to enter administration--an area dramatically different from that of teaching. For those who decide to pursue an administrative career, chapter 4 profiles the available jobs and offers a detailed process for applying for such jobs. Once the job has been secured, chapter 5 offers an outlook of the first few days, offering tips for establishing credibility. Chapter 6 provides an overview of how men still dominate the hierarchy of education and what women can do to navigate through sexual harassment, family demands, and the stress of administrative positions. In chapter 7, tips are given as to how to establish a position on the flagpole. In chapters 8-10, advice is offered on how to maneuver for the top spots in administration, what to look out for while ascending the ladder of success, and what to do when one reaches the top. (RJM)

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UP THE FLAGPOLE

A GUIDE FOR WOMEN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Dr. Beverly M. Enwall
and
Dr. Carolyn O. Fabal

EA 028 954

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Women and the Establishment

Success! The top of the flagpole!

Recognition, responsibility, rewards. That's what it's all about for women who, by choice or by force, spend at least thirty-three percent of their lives in the workplace. In this modern world, women are just as interested in job success as men. Unfortunately, all too often it eludes them, slithering off into the hands of some man.

Why are adult men considered so much more competent than women? As children, girls on the average score higher on standardized tests for reading. While they are still too young to be told differently, girls also score well on tests for mathematics. Yet, as adults, women today comprise a sobering percentage of the low income and poverty level groups. What relegates these bright female minds in such dramatic disproportion to the lower scales of the economic index?

The corporate world has for centuries been the domain of males. In the turmoil of corporate clashes, large-scale marketing, financial wizardry, and international intrigue there are reasons of male prejudice, male tradition, perceived male ability, and male access to major purse strings. Change of course is coming, but on sluggish feet.

Now, what about the world of education? If tradition has designated woman's "place" to be in the home, it has, in American society, just as surely placed her in the school. When we conjure up a vision of that familiar little one-room schoolhouse, we don't envision a man standing at the schoolhouse door, the good reverend on "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman" notwithstanding.

For women, the corporate world of education should offer a natural field for professional advancement. Women not only bear the children and raise them, but women populate the great majority of classrooms to educate them. It would seem logical that women would also fill the administrative and management positions of education.

But they don't.

As schools developed greater complexity in size, programs, and budget, there was birthed The Administrator, -- a man, naturally, hired to supervise the covey of female teachers.[1] Only as schools continued to grow, propelled by federal programs, population explosions, program expansion, and legislative mandates did the demand outrun the supply sufficiently for some forward-thinking school boards to appoint women to school administration.

At the district level, women were, for the most part, given responsibility for reading programs, kindergarten programs, food services, Title I, and occasionally the gifted program. Occasionally a woman also rose to assistant superintendent for instruction, although when she did, her title was likely to be "Director" of instruction while the (male) finance, building, and administration directors were titled "assistant superintendents." At the building level, most women administrators were at elementary schools, some at the middle school, and only a smattering at the high school level. After all, what does a woman know about putting together a football team?[2]

Over the years since women first began to filter in significant numbers into entry level jobs at the building, district and even state level, a few have moved up. Most are stuck where they entered. Furthermore, since the late 1980's, instead of continuing to expand as a "natural" field in which women can advance according to their professional merits, the tide in the corporate world of education has begun to ebb. The number of women school administrators has begun to decline, while the number of men once again increases.

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[1] Naturally, there have always been a few women in charge of schools. One of the author's aunts was principal of a small elementary school in the far northwest in the 1920's. However, when she tragically died at age thirty of a brain tumor, there was many a wise head that wagged in sorrow, certain that she had "burst her brain trying to do a man's job."

[2] This is still a 90's attitude: case in point, the TV series, "Coach" and the disastrous meddling of the female owner.

If education is woman's "natural career" and the precedent has been set, why is it not expanding? Why aren't there more women at the top? Prejudice? Discrimination? Male chauvinism? Certainly such distasteful mind-sets have not yet vanished. Recently a woman assistant superintendent had been acknowledged for years to be "running the district" while the "top man" battled, not too successfully, with his drinking problem. Yet, when the "top man" finally resigned, was the woman officially given the job that she had been unofficially doing for so long?

"We definitely don't want a woman!" exclaimed a school board member who called one of the authors in search of recommended (male) names. "No offense," he added jovially.

His thinking reflected the board's opinion. A man was hired. The woman took a position as superintendent elsewhere. As Fate would have it, in a tidy turn of poetic justice, in this particular case the man was a woeful choice and had to resign within weeks of starting the job.

This bias, seldom with such a deserving outcome, is not a unique situation. Still, it would be a mistake to lay the blame for the scarcity of women administrators on that doughty old monster, Male Chauvinism. Just as significant is the lack of women who are prepared to move into top school management jobs. Women school administrators are not born. Nor are they found standing loyally at the front of their classrooms until some school board member, carrying a magic wand, strolls down the hall, taps on the door window, and beckons them on to glory.

It is true that some forward-looking districts today seek out talent, including female talent, train it, and place it. Other districts have intern programs designed to identify local talent.

But anyone, male or female, seriously planning to step into the administrative role cannot simply wait and hope -- which, incidentally, is not particularly effective administrative behavior.

Success: the flag at the top of the pole. Getting the job is only half the task. The other half: to be successful once you're in. Women who want to move into administration need to prepare for it before they seek out the position. A typical and too frequent case in point: In a coastal district somewhere along the Atlantic coast, an ambitious young woman convinced her middle school principal to give her an opportunity to move into administration as assistant principal, with waivers since she would need to take courses. The principal, a former semi-pro football player and enlightened male chauvinist, convinced his skeptical superintendent to give the woman a chance. The outcome: She almost lost the principal his job because of her incompetence.

A unique case? An unfortunate exception? Unfortunately not. These failures may not be the rule, but they happen too often. In the middle school case in point, to the principal's credit, he did hire a woman again, but this time a prepared and "proven quantity" who happily had remarkable success. However, in most cases, the Establishment goes back to a "safe" bet and hires a man.

For women, as a newly arrived "minority" in school administrative ranks, preparation is more important than for men. Women will come under closer scrutiny than their male counterparts. One might protest that this is not fair. It is not, but whether this is "fair" or not is irrelevant. If you plan to start your career any time soon, it is reality.

At a national meeting a few years ago, a heated floor discussion raged over showing support for the ERA by refusing to hold next year's annual meeting in Atlanta, since Georgia had voted down the ERA. A delegate from Georgia spoke, saying that he hoped the members would come, promising they would be shown the best of southern hospitality. A young woman then took the microphone to retort that she had many invitations from men; what she wanted was respect and recognition.

Every professional, male or female, in every field hopes for respect and recognition. But these rewards are not acquired through job demands, nor job offers, nor jobs held. They are earned by job performance.. Respect and professional recognition cannot be demanded; they must be earned.

Yes, there are fools in high position who receive unearned respect. Yes, there are excellent people who are routinely passed over. Yes, there are men who climb the ladder by marrying the boss's daughter (or the boss), and women who slide upward on their backs. But these people are *not* the rule, not in education.

In today's world, reeking as it does with the parched scent of accountability, the ranks of the undeserving dwindle. While it is unlikely that within our lifetimes the world will become a perfect place where the righteous enjoy immediate rewards, it is increasingly likely, particularly in education, that a good job performance will bring proper rewards.

It is towards helping women achieve this goal of good job performance, together with respect and recognition as administrators in the male-dominated corporate world of education, that this book is aimed. It is our hope that the suggestions and examples in this book, drawn from our own extensive "travels" in educational administration, can help start you off all the way up the flagpole.

May the flag be yours!

Chapter 2

The Corporate World of Education

A Different World

There are many excellent books available to help the budding executive, man or woman, achieve on-the-job skills for advancement in the corporate world of business. Unfortunately, much of what is written does not mesh with the corporate world of *education*. There are fundamental differences between the corporate business world and the school world. Both are Big Business; the smallest school district runs on a multi-million dollar budget. But the weave of the fabric is different, and in many aspects an opposite pattern. Consequently, the same rules for success don't apply.

Competition vs. Individuality

Competition is a value much more highly prized in the corporate world of business. Competition among a number of individuals, often in the same office and performing the same job (e.g., the sales force, the secretarial pool), is a common corporate structure. There may be much talk, and even songs, about being "company men," but the district sales manager watches with enthusiasm how his salespersons struggle to outsell one another. He may even go to great lengths to encourage rivalry, with special rewards of perks and bonuses to the winners of the game.

In the corporate world of business, executives do, and are so advised by acknowledged pundits, to set up their offices in terms of "defense" and "barricade" against the onslaught of office rivals. The conference room may be referred to as the "War Room," where strategies are spun to overpower or bring asunder rival offices.

The rewards for competition, specifically promotion and power, within the corporate structure of business may be more highly valued than money. A study by Shell Corporation years ago revealed that young executives were more interested in advancement to the top than in salary. These findings promoted the notion of early retirement, so that there would be more room at the top for able young executives.[1]

In the corporate world of education, on the other hand, while students rollick through the halls, teachers storm in with problems, and angry parents sit with arms crossed and weapons at the ready in the outer office, a school principal does not smile to see his assistant principals engaged in competitive upmanship. Cohesion, not competition, is a key element in a school structure. If there is to be an assault on the school office, it will come from without, not from within. If the ranks do not stand closed, they will not stand firm. Have you, or a colleague, ever been in conference with an angry parent when the administrator in charge listens to the parent, then turns to the teacher and, siding with the parent, demands an explanation for such incompetent behavior? Can you deduce for yourself the morale of a faculty where this "non-cohesion" is a common administrative practice?

The attitude of competition and game-playing to outdo other administrators, in the way that junior executives in business vie and jockey for position, engenders an attitude that is not appropriate for most administrative positions within education. There is no particular merit or benefit for a principal to encourage the kindergarten teacher to compete with the fourth grade teacher, or the biology teacher to compete with the head of the mathematics department. Nor does Pleasant Hill Elementary School pit itself against Happy Hollow Elementary School in the way that fast food chains strive to outdo one another.[2]

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[1] The corporate notion of firing the fifty-year-olds came later, for economic reasons.

The same down-playing of competitive rivalry carries over to school administrative positions. In schools where there are two or more assistant principals, or districts with two or more assistant superintendents, each is normally assigned different responsibilities. There is nothing productive in encouraging the assistant superintendent for instruction to compete for "production" and "sales" with an assistant superintendent for finance.

Cooperation and individuality are the preferred values in the corporate world of education. Education in our country is geared not for rivalries in which the defeated go down in flames, but for cooperative effort and the individual success of all players. Some competition among students may be encouraged during some activities, and at high school some students calculate their GPA with the precision of a professional bettor. But the less able student is never "fired." Quite the contrary, there are many special programs for the less able. There is great concern over those players who drop out of the game. At all levels, good teachers are careful not to discourage the less able, and instead encourage them and help them to do their best, even if their level of performance is not "competitive."[3]

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[2] It should be noted that with the growing penchant to compare schools in terms of test grades, drop-out rates, and other quantifiable data, there is a developing rivalry as to which school can "look best." If the notion of "parent's choice" is ever implemented, then it may be assumed that a spirit of business rivalry among schools and districts will quickly prevail.

Although competition may be highly desirable and productive in the corporate world of business, where winning is what counts, in the corporate world of education, the athletic field aside, it is not. In education, "junior executives," male or female, who plunge into the fray armed with the ruthless corporate weaponry forged in the fires of cutthroat competition are soon left to rust on a siding or eased off the track altogether.

Uniformity vs. creativity

Uniformity in appearance, in spite of competition within, is much more valued in the corporate world of business than in education. A uniform product, production consistency, interchangeable parts,-- in a word, conformity, -- are lauded achievements in industry. In a corporation, despite the often bitter competition, there is a facade of "teamwork." In large part, most of the "corporate lifetime" of an employee is spent in an environment of uniformity and a veneer, at least of team effort. Straying too far from the "corporate image" or "rocking the boat" can be a major career error. Whatever infighting churns in the hearts of men -- and women--, the mouths smile as they join in a chorus of "IBM, We Love You." No one is encouraged to make up her own verses.

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[3] This, of course, is a major difference with the European system, where "two failures and you're out" has been the traditional procedure. In Germany, in fourth grade the decision about each child's future was made: academic, "civil service," or vocational. Only about 10% of all students reached high school. We have been told that Germany and many similar systems world-wide have now ameliorated this harsh "weed-'em-out" system.

Creativity is not completely obliterated from the corporate world of business. There are certain areas where creativity is rewarded, such as in product development and advertising. Some companies even go to great lengths to reward production and procedural innovations.[4]

However, even in these areas many corporate decision-makers place just as high a value on going with "the tried and true," following a "proven success" route and hence low risk investment. Cases in point: Friday the Thirteenth I-XIII and other "sequels", the look-alike sitcoms and police/detective shows, the spin-off shows, the look-alike ads for look-alike products in which look-alike families munch and savor with look-alike gestures.

Uniformity in the corporate world of education, treating every child the same and expecting each child to fit into the conformity mold, has not been considered "good" education for at least a century. In schools, a major trend in American education during the past several decades has been to find ways to individualize as much as possible within our mass education framework. In terms of production, we promote the phrase, "give to each spear-bearer a spear he (she) can carry."

In education team effort is more than a veneer; it is an inescapable constant. No one individual nor any one unit makes all the decisions nor is solely responsible for the product. The team effort, furthermore, is sequential and occurs over a long period of time, quite unlike the effort to turn out, for example, a refrigerator. The educational effort is so spread out over the required twelve or thirteen years of schooling that it is seldom visible on a day-to-day basis. The number of teachers who function as a visible team within the "school-life" of the child is minimal, confined usually to the middle years (grades 6-8), and even there the actual cooperative effort is sometimes obscured.

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[4] For example, Roger Milliken explained with great pride to one of the authors about his "24/48 plan," in which employee complaints and suggestions are acknowledged within 24 hours, acted on (positively or negatively) in 48. In the Milliken Research facility in Spartanburg, SC, there is a showroom not only of Milliken products, but of framed photographs of Milliken employees who have contributed major production innovations.

Within this educational process, creativity is not only more possible but is much more highly prized. Students are encouraged to be creative. Creative student work is increasingly displayed, not just on classroom walls but in district offices and local malls.

Nor does the value of creativity in education focus only on the student. The creative, innovative teacher: principals wish they had one in every classroom. The same has become true for administrators. School districts have, in large numbers, realized that they need not just a caretaker, a good old boy who follows the rules, but a *creative* administrator who can add new dimensions of community support, teacher morale, and innovative programs, to say nothing of creative financial legerdemain to make the budget cover it all.

For administrators in schools, creativity within job performance is not only valued but required much more frequently than in business. There are positions in education, such as taking charge of one of those endlessly generated "new programs," that depend heavily on the creativity of the program administrator because no one has set any precedents. The person charged to administer the new program not only performs the job but must define and develop the job responsibilities.

There are also in education, unlike most business worlds, many administrative positions, particularly at the district and state level, with only staff authority, not line authority. Administrators in these positions have no authority to "hire and fire." The only authority they exercise is their ability to persuade school and district personnel to initiate a given program, practice, or proposal. That requires creativity!

Consequently, the woman entering school administration cannot depend as heavily on imitative behavior as a woman entering the executive ranks in business. As a school building administrator, she cannot evaluate teachers or students as precisely, for she must adjust her assessment to accommodate their individuality and creativity.

She cannot predict as accurately any dimension of a five-year management plan, for example. New programs like Title II or Special Ed, direct legislative action that requires Economics, socially-dictated changes such as gun control, and the eternal unpredictability of students introduce an inescapable element of guesswork and non-conformity with past practices that businesses, in assessing their status and laying their plans, attempt to eliminate.

Hierarchy vs. interrelationships

Patterns of communication are not the same in the two corporate worlds. In business, the communications between offices are usually limited to the top managers in those offices, e.g., the Sales Division Manager deals with the Personnel Manager or the Accounting Division Manager; their respective staffs seldom have contact. Communications most often follow a vertical pattern of hierarchy structure. Lateral communications occur only when one department has specific "business" with another.

In schools, on the contrary, lateral contacts are essential at all levels and, on a day-to-day basis, much more numerous. An assistant principal in charge of discipline will deal simultaneously not only with other assistant principals but with students and teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, maintenance personnel, guidance counselors, parents, community intervention agencies, law enforcement, in addition, of course, to her principal and, with even less frequency, district office personnel. An administrator at the district level will deal with school building administrators, very possibly teachers, her own "upper echelon" hierarchy, other district personnel in her own office, personnel from other districts, perhaps parents and community people, and maybe even State Department and federal programs personnel.

Because of its communication and job responsibility patterns, the corporate business hierarchical structure is much more clearly defined than is the structure in education. A countywide sales manager is under the statewide sales manager, who answers to the regional sales manager under the division sales manager, in turn under some vice-president back in the home office. Secretaries are "under" those for whom they work, and within the secretarial personnel there is also a clearly established hierarchy, neatly defined by titles such as receptionist, secretary, office manager, administrative assistant, executive secretary, and so on. The payroll usually outlines the hierarchy at a glance.

While there is a definite, if frequently challenged, hierarchy within the corporate world of education, it suffers certain ambiguities.[5] The payroll does not serve to clarify it. True, teachers are in most districts now on the same scale. The first grade teacher makes the same salary as the high school physics teacher, given equal years of schooling and service.

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[5] An issue that should be noted here is a basic problem facing our schools: the perception of the classroom teacher as occupying the lowest rung of the educational hierarchy.

However, a first-year principal, who may have taught a year or so, makes more in most schools than the most senior of teachers at the school, and possibly more than teachers at any school in the district. Arguable as this policy may be, it is widespread. High school principals, on the other hand, earn considerably more than many of the district office personnel, lofty titles notwithstanding, while top district personnel can earn considerably more than many even loftier titles at the State Department of Education. But, it should be noted in further contrast, rarely do any of them earn the six- and seven-figure salaries of top business executives.

In corporate offices in business, the hierarchies are so well defined that there are "power spaces" into which the meek and powerless may not enter. Expanding one's offices space-wise is a power play. Claiming for oneself the most desirable space, such as the office with the corner windows, is a mark of privilege.

In education, space in proportion to power is a notion that begins to break down starting at the state and district level. An individual's office space may reflect the superintendent's view of hierarchy but might not reflect at all the individual's "following" or "influence" in the state/district where the authentic, change-making activity occurs. Case in point from the state level: An art consultant and artist in his own right, so esteemed that any innovation he seriously suggests enjoys a high percentage of implementation by art teachers, works in half a small, crowded, uncarpeted office. In contrast, a spacious, well-appointed office houses the supervisor of a particular federal program who is so unesteemed that he is unable to persuade districts to send federal program representatives to his allocations meetings.

Demographics and its effect on space can catch up to school and district personnel much more quickly than to business personnel. Business usually can respond more quickly to acquiring space for new staff than can education, because business can make quick financial adjustments whereas education is dependent on its annual tax-derived budget. Consequently, office space status or lack of it in the corporate world of education might reflect not the occupant's rung of the ladder as the overcrowding of a mushrooming staff in the same old district building.

At the school building level, the concept of space as power breaks down completely. All academic subject area teachers have roughly the same size classrooms, but certainly there is a differentiation of "power." The teachers of band and physical education may have bigger "classrooms," but they are not necessarily the biggest power players. In more than one school the janitor, with his broom closet office, enjoys a popularity and credibility among students that the assistant principals can only envy.

When teachers are not in their own classroom, seat of their power, they tend to move directly to the central power area (main administrative offices) to run their errands, and in this central power area even non-players, such as parents, may often be seated. Central offices in a school building are often changed around to accommodate new personnel, new programs, and occasionally a little extra money to improve the office. And there is no area in the school where students do not invade, urged on, perhaps, by some inchoate, primal urge to challenge the hierarchy.[6]

In the offices of the corporate world of business, hierarchy is such an ever present demarcation that you don't need to read the signs and titles on the doors to know who has the higher position. Just read the status symbols. The size and location, or space, of the office may provide the first clue, but there are many other indicators.

The arrangement of secretaries provides a clue. Low echelon executives direct their work to the secretarial pool; higher echelon executives may have both secretary and private receptionist. The desk and the type of telephone are revealing. The man, or woman, behind the metal desk with the standard black telephone is far down the ladder from the occupant of the wooden desk with its designer color phone, but his or her standard wooden office desk bows humbly to the designer, no-drawer desk of a higher-up. The key to the executive washroom is a coveted object and is often wrought in gold metal. Dress codes are almost robotic in their effect. Many companies have the most insignificant trinkets enshrined in a glittering domain of hierarchical "perks" and rewards.

Status symbols are standard and encouraged not only as weapons and rewards in corporate war games of business but also for various profit-oriented reasons. The suite of a corporate law office carpeted with expensive Oriental rugs laid on hardwood floors gives the prospective clients an immediate feeling of confidence; these lawyers must be good, since obviously they have made money, and obviously their fees are going to be high. The client is mentally prepared for these high fees before he arrives at the first receptionist. The well-dressed salesman in a late model car gives a prospective buyer more confidence in the reliability of the salesman's firm than if that same salesman were to arrive wearing well-worn sneakers and driving an elderly Volkswagen.

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[6] Students themselves, however, stake out power areas. There are "spots" for the popular into which student non-entities may not roam.

In the corporate world of education, however, based as it is on taxpayers' money, luxurious district office buildings are immediately suspect and may even provoke newspaper editorials.[7] Principals who dress grandly and take annual junkets to luxury resorts do not garner popularity with their faculty. The State Department of Education representative who pulls up to the district office in a Porsche is even more suspect.

These status symbols in the corporate world of business exude the aroma of "power" and demand respect. But in the corporate world of education such status symbols merely confirm suspicions that central office personnel are grossly overpaid and should be eliminated.

There are very basic reasons for this different attitude towards status symbols. Teachers, the great majority of the school personnel, do not make much money. School secretaries do not make much money. Consequently, the fiscal realities that the great majority of school employees must battle in their own lives predispose them to be seriously annoyed when those around them flaunt their affluence.

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[7] Citizens of Greenville, SC, were outraged at the sumptuous offices built for the district personnel; citizens of Pasco County in Florida were outraged at the $2500 decorative bell purchased for a new high school, as well as the $100,000 spent on furniture for district offices. A former superintendent of Georgetown County, SC, on the other hand, garnered great public good will by purchasing an old house and refurbishing it to as the district office.

Beyond this personal irritation, there is in education a serious dimension of mission. Education has the responsibility for shaping the minds of children, and this is not taken lightly by many educators. Consequently, for an individual in the system to focus disproportionately on the outer trappings of success, when the school's focus is on the inner development of the child, simply goes against the grain.

A different product for a different clientele

The corporate commercial product is predictable, planned and approved from drawing board to manufacture to marketplace. It is made of the best available (or most economical) materials and methods for the purpose, carried out under strictly supervised conditions.

In schools, there is no drawing board. There is no control over the raw materials that enter the process. There is no control over other "processes" that happen to the products when they're not at school. Consequently, while a business executive may expect to achieve a one hundred percent success in a given year, a school administrator, no matter how perfect the process, never can.

In the world of business and industry, the corporate product is purchased by a voluntary clientele, by those who make the decision to purchase it. The public as the client must be sold, cajoled, and persuaded to make the purchase.

The public schools have a captive clientele, not unlike utilities and other monopolies. The school "product" must be "purchased" by those who happen to live in the taxpaying vicinity, a monopoly that parents in some states are trying to break up with vouchers. The schools, without having to use persuasion of any kind, also ask for a much greater commitment from the customer than does businesses. A manufacturer asks its clientele for an investment of purchase price; the schools ask for an investment of the family's children.

Because of their differing products for differing clienteles, the two corporate worlds spawn very different management systems. The corporate world of business is, as an entity, much more autonomous. Decisions are made by management, and management alone, based from time to time on indirect "client input" as determined by market research and profits. Korda in his work on "Power" describes quite vividly the allure of top management positions in business as "a chance to play God," since all accountability resides within the corporate system itself, as long as profits are up.

In schools, the role of God is not available. There is too broad a pantheon. The clientele is directly represented in the policy-making school board. The clientele constitutes a palpable presence as the parent community. The school clientele has a keen, vested interest in the quality of the product. Consequently, schools are much more vulnerable to the impact of public opinion then corporations. It would take a large number of dissatisfied customers to bring asunder a fast food chain. A much smaller number have spelled the end of a school superintendent's career.

Consequently, unlike business executives whose concern with the public is limited to the success of the product(s) or service(s), administrators within the school system must be prepared to deal not only with their clientele but with public opinion over a broad range of issues.

One unfortunate effect of this difference is that, while the business executive can focus wholly on producing a product (be that product sales, service, or whatever) and deriving a profit therefrom, the school administrator cannot. The school administrator, whose "product" is education and whose profit in the eyes of the public is too often test scores, must also deal with a covey of non-educational problems such as gun control, drugs, and a battery of felonies and crimes.

Not only must the administrator deal with these problems, but the staff she manages also deals constantly with the real world, not just when her staff goes home but all day long in the line of duty. The bulk of corporate business personnel, except for certain levels of the sales force, does not meet up with disgruntled customers nor with the personal problems of those customers[8]. School personnel does. There is no corporate cocoon to shield educational personnel or deflect from them the blows of public disapproval or social maladies. Creating that shield is one of the tasks that falls to the educational managers, such as providing on-site deputy sheriffs, parameters for parent conferences, punishment for violence, processes for referrals to health care agencies, staff to attend court trials and hearings.

Another consequence of this difference directly affects hiring policies. The manager in the corporate world of education must evaluate her personnel with social awareness in mind. If a specialist in automotive striping and tinting cherishes personal values more suitable to the 1950's, the manager of the automotive appearance shop does not care because those values do not effect the striping and tinting. It does not matter what social values are held by computer technicians at the Apple Computer store in Dallas, because they are not supposed to deal with customers nor answer the phone. Employees with the required "people skills" are hired for sales and customer relations.

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[8] There are exceptions: e.g., the tobacco industry.

In contrast, in the world of education, all personnel needs those skills. If the sixth-grade teacher or the guidance counselor in a school is a social throwback to the 50's, the school manager has a problem. Case in point: A national publisher, the very prototype of a major corporate executive, commented in a textbook meeting, "Of course, there is no black history until Reconstruction." Certainly that is a quaint and archaic notion, yet his publishing company continues to flourish. His notions are hidden within the corporate cocoon.

On the other hand, in a large, urban school district "somewhere" in the southeast a young woman, newly appointed to the principalship of an elementary school, responded to a teacher's complaint of a stolen $10 by strip-searching a number of children, but only the black children. It surprised no one but the young woman that the school parents, black and white, were outraged, met in a stormy and publicly televised session, and the incident was the talk of the whole state. No, the young woman, unlike the publishing company, not only did not flourish but did not survive as principal.

Such is the difference between the two corporate worlds. In the world of education, society and the daily work schedule are inextricably bound together. To deal with today's students, school personnel, unlike a significant percentage of corporate personnel, need to be aware, sensitively aware, of today's societal problems, quirks, and anomalies. Otherwise, they cannot function effectively, and their employer needs to take that into consideration. The teacher, or school administrator, who believes, for example, that all children have parents at home who care about them, or who sends home a blistering note about a 6th grader's use of "filthy language," to wit, "making love," needs to find a corporate cocoon in some other world.

A different mission

The ultimate goal of corporate business and industry is profit. That is their goal. That is what their stockholders demand. That is the inflexible, unforgiving standard of their success. For business and industry, profits tell the whole story. From this basis there arise motivations, procedures, and values, hence administrative behaviors and norms, quite different from those in the corporate world of education.

In education, the ultimate motive is to realize each child's potential. That is what our stockholders demand. The profit is not overall gain, but as much success as is possible for every individual child. School "profits" are not all accountable at the end of the year; certainly test scores don't tell the whole story. The ultimate success or failure may not be visible for years after the schools have done their work.

All these differences between the process and purpose and personnel of business and education make school administration a world unto itself, with its own rules and its own techniques for successful management. Some of these it shares with the worlds of business and industry. Some it does not. But it is a world in which a woman can be and should be, and in many cases already is, an effective and successful administrator.

CHAPTER 3

To Climb or Not to Climb

"Be careful of what you want! You might get it!"

A mathematics teacher who for some time had yearned to enter administration was recently invited to serve as an acting assistant principal for a week while the administrator herself was at a national meeting. Flattered and eager, the teacher accepted. When the week was done, she fled back to her classroom, muttering, "Now I know that's *not* what I want to do!"

Administration is not the same as teaching. The skills required are different, the responsibilities and duties are different, the rewards are different. In the business world, moving up does not usually involve such a change. To move, for example, from Plywood Division Manager to Wood Products Division Manager brings a broader span of control, but the basic activities, procedures and expectations are familiar. To move from science teacher to assistant principal, however, is not an expansion of job responsibility. It is a complete change.

Many teachers, men as well as women, have propelled themselves into administrative positions, only to find themselves doing deeds and duties they do not enjoy. They took the job because it was a "step up." Now they dare not "step down." Most of us are reluctant to reverse our status; we worry that the world will wonder what hideous incompetence of ours came to light that forced us suddenly to go "back down."

Occasionally there are courageous souls with a strong self concept and a confidence about what they want out of life who realize they have made a mistake and return to the classroom or to a "lower" echelon. One (male) PE teacher and coach, after six months of very successful administration, preferred to return to working with students. Two district-

level assistant superintendents for instruction, both widely respected for extraordinary job performance, opted for "lesser" positions that would afford them more compatible lifestyles, the woman going as assistant principal to a high school, the man to the principalship of a small, rural elementary school.

But individuals that strong of soul are indeed the exception. Unhappily, much more frequent is the disillusioned, dissatisfied, self-entrapped administrator at all levels, building, district, and state, who dares not let go.

Leaping into administration is akin to leaping into marriage. If the reasons are right, the reward is happy fulfillment. If the reasons are wrong, disaster looms. Before you start off in search of a flagpole to climb, you may want to take a few minutes for a very honest assessment of your own motives. What is *really* pushing you towards the corporate world of education?

Why Do YOU Want to Be an Administrator?

In our combined years of educational administration, we have catalogued, from among women (and some men) administrators and would-be administrators, several very wobbly reasons for wanting to break into the ranks. At this point, we would like to share our list with you.

Seven Reasons to Forget about Flagpoles

1) *To get even with a man: "I'm going to show Bob that I can hold down a responsible job just as well as he can."*

Bob may be the spouse, or the ex-spouse, or the boyfriend, or the hoped-for boyfriend. Whatever else he is, Bob is not a good reason to climb a flagpole. Your success, if any, may eventually impress him, but your attitude will impress no one.

2) *To get even with all men: "A woman can do any job as well or better than a man, and I'm going to prove it."*

Man-bashing is not a good reason to change your life. You are unlikely to change men. They are still not too different from Adam, who was so quick to claim that Eve force-fed him that apple. Man-bashing, however tempting, promises little success for your career. The pole you plan to climb is covered with men who, quite understandably, resent being bashed.

3) *I owe it to the ERA. I owe it to my network.*

Taking up for a cause is always a noble act. But it can be less than wise if it pushes you into a life you don't really want to live. As for the "girls" in the network who egg you on, it has been our frequent observation that they may surprise you if you are too successful. Misery that loves company does not take well to the success of that same company. This is a sad truth, but one we have both often observed, and, upon unhappy occasion, experienced.

4) *"I'm sick and tired of coping with these kids. They're getting worse every year."*

A burned-out teacher will not be a good administrator. That is a fact. One role of administrators at any level in the corporate world of education is leadership. The weary of soul can lead no one. If you are truly fed up with our students today and the attitudes of their parents, then your move needs to be out of education, not deeper into the turmoil.

5) *"I want less work. Administrators have it easy."*

School-based administrators work longer hours, later and more days a week, than anyone else in the building. That is a fact. District and state-level personnel, in most systems, are required to work an eight-hour office day and are allowed only two to three weeks vacation during the year. They are also more directly accountable and more visibly supervised than a classroom teacher and, if they are doing their job properly, frequently work overtime without compensation.

However, unlike a teacher, an administrator can have a cup of coffee or "powder her nose" at her discretion instead of waiting for the bell to ring.

6) *"The only way our department is going to get the money it needs is if one of us gets into administration."*

Here we have another champion of a cause, to be sure a more narrow cause than the Justification of Woman, but a cause nonetheless. Because she is committed to her own favorite thing, she might believe it is worth it. But as an administrator, one cannot successfully play favorites. The able department head or lead teacher can champion her subject area, grade level, favorite program, and rally other teachers behind her. The able administrator must deal even-handedly with all and keep in sight the broad, total school (or district or state) picture. Private agendas quickly come to light, with unhappy repercussions.

7) *"Someone needs to shape up this school!"*

However grandiose this notion may strike the reader, it seems to be a common reason, not confined to women, to grab a flagpole and start climbing. Certainly we all have known schools where the leadership leaves much to be desired, for any number of reasons. But the "shaper-upper" is perceived by those "below her" as a dangerous beast unless she is a master manipulator of people. Being "shaped up" from on high in most schools meets with considerable resistance, at times resembling armed rebellion, from both the faculty and the administrative hierarchy.

Money

Money may be denigrated in our missionary profession as an unworthy motive, but it is probably the most common reason for leaving the classroom and entering administration. Administrators make more money. Although we have no statistics, our conservative estimate is that 90% of men have to us, "I can't understand a man who'd be content to stay in the classroom when he could make more money as a principal." Scratch the surface of most male classroom teachers, and you'll uncover an aspiring administrator. There is nothing especially "wrong" about that. A man has a right to improve his earning power.

Women have the same right. One of the biggest changes in education personnel is that teaching is no longer a "second income job," a dole to be earned by the wife as a supplement to the husband's income. The reasons for this change have little to do with education and everything to do with our society and the national economy. The reality: most women have to work. Many women are the sole source of support for their family.[1] These women *must* consider salary.

Of course, there are also women out there "expressing their personality" so that it doesn't get "stifled by marriage." These women also have a right to aspire to a better salary, just as they would if they were in a corporation, or a law firm, or a fast food franchise. Being married does not mean a woman relinquishes all rights to any independent financial gain. The argument once heard from a professor at a large California university when he and a woman were vying for the one full professorship available, "I have children to support, and her husband makes plenty of money!" simply does not wash.

Moving to a higher salary bracket is a normal practice in the workplace. It is even more reasonable in the corporate world of education because teacher salaries are at the bottom of the scale. As was pointed out at the 1982 meeting of the National Academy of Science and the Academy of Engineers, teachers are no longer willing to "live in genteel poverty" just because theirs is "a noble calling." Not much has changed since then. Many districts nationwide, according to 1993 figures, offered a starting teacher salary only $2000 to $3000 above the official federal poverty level. In the 1990's in a Florida school district, an 18-year teacher veteran (male) awarded Teacher of the Year made an annual salary of $31,000; the public relations lady at the district office, on the job for 8 months: $68,000.

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[1] For the uninformed, the number of men skipping out on child support are a problem of such magnitude that not only have national measures been attempted to track them down and take them to court, but several State Legislatures have bills on the docket to increase penalties for delinquent fathers.

While the philosophy may be askew that puts teacher salaries at the bottom rung, that is the reality. Wanting to earn more money is a justifiable motive. However, money is a more solid reason for finding a flagpole when it is combined with any or all of the following.

Reasons to Find the Nearest Flagpole

1. *I am ready for more responsibility.*
2. *I want a new challenge to expand my horizons.*
3. *I know I can do a good job in administration.*
4. *I have some good ideas, and I want a chance to use them.*

Woven into the complex reasons of why any of us decide to change our present lives,[2] one of the above four reasons should figure largely in a decision to move into school administration. The woman who can honestly claim one or more of the above should, by all means, go in search of a flagpole to climb.

Stripping for the Job

Before you begin your ascent to success, you may want to make sure you are not carrying around mental baggage that might make your climb more difficult. The authors have both might make your climb more difficult. The authors have both seen, with almost dismaying frequency, perfectly capable and often well prepared women, either in administration or hoping to get into administration, who are their own worst enemies. They suffer from self-defeating attitudes. And they do, indeed, self-defeat.

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[2] One of the authors decided to apply for (and got) a higher management position simply because she did not want to work for any of the men applying for that position.

The mother complex

The higher you go, the clearer it will become to you that you are being paid to do a job, not to be a mother. Men rarely have this trouble. If their child is sick, it occurs to very few of them to stay home, even in this modern day of role reversals. If Baby Debbie needs to get to the dentist, men seldom skip a staff meeting to take her. They make other arrangements.

You will have to make other arrangements, too. While this should be obvious, it seems that in practice it is a rule most frequently violated by women. This does not imply that women with families need not look to administration.[3] It does mean that a mother's attitude and an administrator's job do not mix. If the School Advisory Board meets the night of Debbie's recital, a choice has to be made: mother, or administrator.

If you have a husband who pitches a fit when his dinner is not on the table at 6:00 sharp, administration may be a wrong choice for you. Perhaps you have an elderly parent who cannot be left alone for too long. Perhaps you need to be home right after three o'clock to relax. Perhaps your relatives expect you to bail them out of their crises at a moment's notice. For whatever reason, if your family life is so high on your priority list that no compromise can be made, no alternative arrangements suitable, no part of it turned loose, then administration is not for you, at least, not now.

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[3] Cases in point: the authors have worked all their adult lives and between them have raised their own seven children, a feat shared by most of the women administrators we know.

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The emotional woman

It is a teaching of our more traditional society that women are emotional; it is a teaching of our psychoanalyst-bound society that it is healthy to vent our emotions. "They'll just have to put up with my moods! That's the way I am." One of the characters in the Alan Alda movie, *Four Seasons*, explained away her every outburst: "I can't help it. I'm Italian." Whether you are from Italy, Sweden, Gambia, from any of the fifty United States and/or from any of their represented ethnic backgrounds, whether you feel it is healthier for you or not, and whether you feel it is the woman's right or not, moods do *not* mix with administration.

There is nothing so disconcerting to an employee than not to know what "mood" awaits him, or her, when the office door opens. Nor, for that matter, to young students when the class bell rings. Fortunately, one seldom meets a moody elementary school teacher. By high school students do not necessarily harbor high expectations of authority, i.e., their teachers, but employees do expect consistency from their administrators.

Women are not alone in venting their moods. The authors have dealt male administrators who one day are Mr. Jock, "Ho ho ho!" and a hearty handshake; the next day they become Mr. Ranking Person, cold, formal, and distant. The authors have dealt with men who one day want to talk everything out; the next day they are inaccessible, no matter what the crisis. We have dealt with men who, taking umbrage, let fly with a nasty Memo to vent their spleen, throw a report across the desk at a staff member, or, seized by a mood swing, deliberately reverse a subordinate's decision that yesterday had been approved. These outbursts may make them feel better, but it also has kept them from climbing any further.

Weeping, shouting, and frothing at the mouth have no place in the workplace. The damage they will do to you as an administrator is irreversible. It is never forgotten by your the memory of these outbursts and the fear of their recurrence will keep your staff constantly on guard, never comfortable with you, and delighted to see the last of you.

As an administrator, the reverse of emotional outbursts is expected of you. It will be one of your tasks to be the harbor of calm, to soothe the overly emotional, to sit them down and restore rationality before you can even begin to address whatever conflict has erupted. If you are not in command of your own emotions, you cannot successfully command others. You will be miserable in administration, and so will everyone you administer.

The combatant

Do you honestly believe either of the following statements?

1) Men must be coerced into accepting women as equals.
2) Women resent other women if they are successful.

Both attitudes are emotional baggage you don't need. True, there are men who will never be able to relate to women as professional equals. True, there are women who resent another woman's success on the job -- or anyplace else.[4] But if you nurture a bouquet of negative expectations, whether of men or women, you will certainly sniff them out, or think you have. As an administrator, it is crucial that you accept each person with an open mind, and that you have those same positive expectations of your staff and colleagues that teachers are told to have for their students.

The sex kitten

If you believe that sex appeal can get you anywhere you want to go, you need to take a closer look at the corporate world of education. Perhaps you notice all those schools filled with women? Education is a world where women make up the majority of the rank and file, and they are not impressed with the sex kitten. Nor will they be fooled! No one is more alert to sex kitten tricks than another woman.

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[4] In our experience, which may be unique, those most prone to resent others are those who cluster into women's networks. We have no explanation for this phenomenon, only our repeated observations.

Education is also a world where even if male administrators might find a sex kitten appealing, they are also aware that they themselves are in part publicly judged for their adherence to traditional family values. That is still true in the 1990's. Principals and supertinendents are still losing their jobs or being "transferred" because of extramarital affairs. Women are being "not re-hired" or transferred into oblivion because they are sleeping around, or the man they clung to has fallen from grace.

Sex appeal, in a woman who wants to be an administrator, is a loaded gun, no better and no worse than the woman who has it. It is not, however, a passport to any place but eventually out the back door.

Ready, Set, Go!

Hopefully you have now determined, upon sober self-analysis, that you are willing to give the job as much dedication as a man, or even more, since you will be scrutinized more closely. Your personal life is such that you can arrange for some flexibility. You can handle the emotions and the stress of administration without turning the office into a whitewater raft ride. Yours is a positive attitude toward all you may meet on your upward climb. You have the skills and abilities needed for administration, as opposed to teaching. You have what it takes.

You are now ready to look for a flagpole.

Preliminary Preparations

If you have not already done so, you will have to take certain, prescribed courses for eventual certification as an administrator. There was a time when the only administrators

required to obtain special certification were those aspiring to be principals. Now in some states even district level specialists and program directors must meet requirements over and above those for teacher certification, either by state mandate or district policy.

Your Office of Personnel can provide information for you, as can the Office of Certification at your State Department of Education.[5] When dealing with either, be sure you get their responses *in writing*. There will be less chance of miscommunication, and the written statements can be used for reference even if the person with whom you dealt has changed jobs during the time lapsed.

The required courses are only one part of sensible preparation for a move into administration. What you learn in these classes varies from extremely useful to totally useless. If you are fortunate enough to have professors who are both experienced in school administration and articulate in communicating this experience, you will learn much. Unhappily, ads for professors of educational administration have been published in which a criterion is: "practical experience desirable, but not required." In such classes, where the parameters of reality are missing, you may emerge unscathed by knowledge.

Even if you are fortunate in your lottery of professors, there are additional avenues you need to pursue. Almost every State Department of Education offers some type of training academy, special seminars or workshop sessions for administrators. Many of them also have as one of their components an assessment center or assessment sessions for both current and aspiring administrators.

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[5] By "State Department of Education," understand the state agency for education whose precise designation varies, e.g., in Texas it is the Texas Education Agency.

Surprisingly few teachers are aware of these opportunities. If your district staff development coordinator cannot give you information, call your State Department of Education and explain what you want to know; you will be put through to the appropriate office. Your attendance at such sessions alone will begin to establish for you some spark of credibility as a potential administrator.

If conducted competently, these working assessments are useful for the administrator and invaluable for the aspiring administrator. Through the use of simulations and paper exercises, the participant has an opportunity to practice some basic administrative skills and have her performance evaluated and discussed for strengths and areas needing improvement.

Unlike the state or nationally-affiliated professional associations for principals and superintendents where attendance is often restricted to members already holding administrative positions, teachers may usually attend these state-sponsored workshops if proper application is made. Depending on the attitude of your district and your particular administrator, you may or may not have to attend on your own time. Local policies vary greatly in this regard, both for faculty, school administrators, and even district and state personnel.[6]

Elbowing into the Network

For a woman, one of the most difficult tasks, even in this modern world poised on the edge of the 21st century, is to convince the men around her that she is competent enough to be their peer. This is true whether she is one of the "little teachers" in the school or whether she is one of the pleasant "little consultants" in the district office. Without falling into the trap of exuding negative expectations, you do need to be aware that there is a risk when you first express your interest in administration. When you are ready to announce, "I'm here. I can do the job," you need to be prepared, -- but not braced with sword unsheathed, -- for negative reactions from both men and women. Some may ignore your aspirations. Some may frown at them and try to dissuade you. Others may encourage you for the wrong reasons.[7] Some may even laugh.

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[6] One of the authors, for example, under one Director was encouraged to attend superintendents' meetings; under another, while holding the same position, she was forbidden to attend.

Ignore the negatives. They are merely the birthpains of a new perception of you. Do however, look around your current working environment and determine what or where the informal "training ground" for male administrators lies. If you are in a middle school or high school, it may well be in athletics: the coaches are the administrators-in-training. If so, one thing you can do is become a coach. With the advent of equal opportunity in girls' interscholastic sports, there is more opportunity for you to coach than before.

Not all middle schools have interscholastic sports, and not all high schools have coaching opportunities, but they may have or could have intermurals, or you can organize intramurals. There are also opportunities for middle/junior high school teachers to volunteer to coach or assistant-coach one of the high school teams.[8]

If you are already in administration at the school or district level, attend the professional meetings that attract the administrators. At those meetings, mingle, make contacts, talk

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[7] Some men see this as an excellent opportunity for the seduction gambit. Others may have their own political agenda. One of the authors was heartily encouraged by a male administrator to apply for a job at his level but in a different section. His apparent camaraderie had its own agenda: he believed he would have in a woman a pushover rival, an easy opponent, a no-threat competitor for programs, funds, and priorities.

[8] One of the authors coached softball, replete in uniform. We are pleased to report her team had an impressive record of wins.

shop, see and be seen, listen and learn.[9] Everyone's specific situation varies, but all administrative situations in the corporate world of education have that informal training ground somewhere. Find where you can tap in. One woman administrator tapped into the network thanks to her proficiency at golf, in a district where "the boys" played on Saturdays and talked shop as they strolled the fairways.

Garner Visibility

Seek out opportunities to be seen and evaluated in minor administrative roles. The most direct way is to volunteer to chair a *significant* committee. You will advance very little by successfully providing posters and banners for the pep rally, or offering to label all the bottles in the science lab. For your purpose, much more profitable would be chairing a Leadership or Curriculum or Blueprint-for-the-Future committee whose work will have, or should have, some impact. While it is a fact that most teacher committees generate reports that gather dust, if you can at least chair the meetings, complete the task, and present a good report, your own personal objective has been achieved.

Another route at the school level is to volunteer to organize a meaningful program or activity, perhaps one that involves community liaison work such as a career-shadowing program, or computers-for-kids, or adopt-a-highway, or a gala fashion show, or a motivators' program. You want your supervisor (the person who put you in charge) to see your ability to work with other people, organize procedures, and carry a plan to completion.[10]

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[9] But do avoid pontificating in an effort to impress. At the bottom of the flagpole, you have neither the experience nor the credibility.

10 Does it need to be said? You do not achieve your goal if you perform the task on behalf of someone herself in a minor position who has her own agenda or who will use your efforts to garner kudos for herself.

If you work at a district office, being in charge of refreshments for the School Board meetings does nothing for your career. However, organizing, or better yet initiating, programs that involve several schools shows your supervisors a measure of your organizational ability.[11] Projects that involve cooperation with other offices within the district system or cooperative agency efforts also give you an opportunity to show that you can blend people into an effective working unit.

As you seek out these opportunities, be sure to bring each one to closure with some kind of evaluation. Sometimes an evaluation form filled out by participants is appropriate; sometimes it is not, and the evaluation must rely on the results you achieved and your own self assessment. In either case, with your evaluation results in hand, set up a time to sit down with the supervisor who first appointed or approved you for the task and ask for feedback.

How successful was it? How might it have been improved? What might you have done differently? In this session, listen and be open to suggestions, not defensive. Keep in mind that you do have things to learn, and an outside perspective is essential. Besides, any rational supervisor is more impressed by an employee who wishes to improve than by one who claims to be perfect.

Occasionally one has the misfortune to work for a hypercritical, negative supervisor who wants his/her employees never to shine. Should you be in such an unfortunate position, then ask someone also "in power" to be involved in your project in some appropriate way and do a feedback session with that person.

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[11] One of the authors organized a statewide foreign language day involving some 10,000 students, which later, somewhat unexpectedly, served as a very positive plus in her favor when reviewed for a higher administrative position.

Learning by Observation

You are surrounded by invaluable lessons in administration, if you will only observe and evaluate. Perhaps you are already doing this. Perhaps what you see around you is what has convinced you that you can do a better job. Even if you are in a situation where the role models around you are unfortunate, you can learn. Bad examples, especially when you are on the receiving end and suffer the incompetence, are as valuable a learning tool as a good example.

If, for example, you sit in a meeting where the entire staff is being read the riot act for abuse of the copying machines, when you and everyone else knows that the abuse can be laid at the door of one individual, the resentment you feel is teaching you a good lesson in administration: do not scold the group for the sins of one, but face up to administrative responsibility by calling in the one and reading him (or her) the riot act.

When, for example, a student whom you send down for discipline is given a suspension for three days, and that afternoon the parent arrives, is placated by the principal, and the student reappears absolved and grinning in your class the next day, your frustration provides another good lesson in administration: do not overturn rulings to placate a parent, for the word spreads, the students react,[12] and the precedent has been set.

Hopefully in your work environment there are some good role models for you to emulate, the kind of administrators who are referred to as "high flyers." Hopefully, from among the good administrators, men and women, there are some who will encourage you for all the right reasons. Such people who can be of real help to you on your quest, performing the valuable role of mentor.

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[12] Students, of course, react diversely in such situations. Some rejoice, some are outraged, some shrug and say the system "sucks."

You and Your Mentor

If at all possible, try to find, from among the "high flyers" or even from among the very competent, in your school, your district, or within communicable distance, one who will mentor you, advise you, warn you, monitor and correct your steps. A "mentor" is not the same as an "annointer."

A mentor helps you learn the skills. A mentor helps you develop your abilities. An annointer, on the other hand, is a patron who coddles you into the best available position. Of course "knowing someone up there" may give you a warm, smug feeling. The drawback: you arrive without the skills to hold the position, and you will probably fall off the flagpole with a resounding thud.

Be very cautious of peers who offer to mentor you. For one thing, they probably do not have the necessary experience. Consider this: If your peer is so proficient, why is he/she not on his/her own flagpole by now? Consider also that the world has many people who do not want to make the effort themselves to climb higher, but at the same time they want no one else to climb above them.

Consider also that it is not given to many human hearts to rejoice in the good fortune of others. A case in point: when a state social studies consultant, upon the election of a new state superintendent, was promoted all the way up to Legislative Liaison, one of the authors saw him three days later and congratulated him. He thanked her, commenting that she was the only person in the entire agency who had offered congratulations.

You may have in your environment a peer of golden heart, wise in the ways of administration. But the odds are not good. Be wary.

Probably your mentor, should you find one, will be a man, simply because of the current ratio of men to women administrators. He may feel some reluctance to mentor a woman, because a relationship will be formed between the two of you, not a sexual one but a protective closeness that must be handled with delicacy. While we have shed much of the attitude that if a man helps a woman, he must be sleeping with her, mentorship can foster gossip, particularly if the mentorship threatens to create a rival for promotion.

You cannot stop these consequences, only be prepared for them. How you handle them depends a great deal on you, your mentor, and the situation. As a rule of thumb, gossip that is being circulated should be tracked down so that you know the source. It is probably a mistake to ignore it; it is probably best to mention it to your mentor, preferably in a semi-humorous, conversational tone rather than an angry, indignant tone, since the gossiper is most likely one of your male peers hoping also to climb the flagpole. At least, that has been our experience.

You can also counteract the potential for gossip, if your mentor is married, by making a special effort to know his wife, being very gracious, and *never* patronizing to her. Realize that you are a threat to her. Unless this is an administrative twosome, be sensitive to the fact that you are able to share in her husband's work in ways that she never can. Be creative. Find ways to let her think that the *three* of you are sharing the work, and that she is sharing her husband with no one.

If you are not able to establish a mentorship relation with a successful administrator in your work environment, you may be able to establish a "secret pal" mentorship, wherein the person is your mentor but doesn't know it. This is actually easier for women, for under the guise of social chitchat, they can steer the conversation to his job and listen with rapt attention as he preens over his latest coup. Being a male talking to a female, he will be pleased to display his abilities. You, smiling all the while, are learning what he otherwise might not be as willing to teach.

Different situations will require that the individual woman make use in different proportions and degrees of whatever is available to her in this on-site learning process. But the objective is the same: learn to see your working world not just from within your immediate boundaries but as if you were already a ways up the flagpole. Learn to see the school, or the district, as a whole. Learn how things are done well, and how they are done poorly, and how to avoid the latter.

You are in a living lab. Make the most of it.

CHAPTER 4

Finding the Right Flagpole

Where the Jobs Are

Entry level jobs in administration exist at both the school and the district office level in several categories. There are *unit* administrators, specifically the principals and assistant principals, the superintendent and assistant superintendents. There are *program* administrators in charge of handicapped programs, vocational programs, specific subject areas, testing, textbooks, staff development, specific federal programs, gifted and talented programs, and so on, varying with the district and the size of the district. A large district may have three or four language arts consultants; a small district may have only one language art coordinator. A large district may have a music consultant and an art consultant; a small district may have no one directly in charge of fine arts, social studies, science or foreign language. Yet another district may have no subject area specialists at all, opting for generalists at elementary and secondary levels.

There are also administrators in charge of *special services* such as guidance, attendance, food services, maintenance, school busses, and perhaps even nursing, substance abuse, and crisis intervention. There are administrators in charge of *system operations* such as finance, personnel, federal programs and grants, building construction, public relations, media production and printing.

Where you begin depends of course on your experience, your background, and your goals. It is helpful if you have some idea of where you want to go so that you can analyze your best routes to that goal. If you intend to move into central administration, you may want to seek a position not too isolated from the main channel of district activities. It is unlikely that as director of the media center you will be in line for an assistant superintendancy.[1] You may prefer to follow a direct route: assistant principal, to principal, to assistant superintendent, to superintendent. You may prefer, based on your experience and available openings, to follow an indirect route: federal program project director, to federal programs coordinator, to finance officer. If your district does not offer the route you want, other districts will. Investigate. A district's organizational chart is *public information*.

Position openings are also public information. Advertising open positions is required by law. If you are interested in a position in your current district, you will find the current openings posted in faculty lounges and in the district office. You should also be able to find posted somewhere in your own district office notices for openings in other districts in the same general geographical area.[2]

Bulletin boards at the local university's College (Department) of Education often have ads, and professional journals for administrators may also carry ads. Newspaper classified ads occasionally have these positions advertised, but this is not usual and frequently is nothing but a token legal compliance. Many regions and states hold a Job Fair for educators. It is a more economical option than travel for both employer than employee, but the value for potential administrative jobs varies tremendously. Find out about your nearest Job Fair before you go, who is there and for what positions. For positions other than school-based, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* can also be consulted. You can also write to the Office of Personnel in districts that interest you; district office addresses, together with the names of district superintendents, are available from the State Department of Education.

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[1] There are cases in which the Food Service Director was moved to Director of Finance, and a Foreign Language Consultant moved into Curriculum Development Supervisor. But these odd occurrences resulted from peculiar circumstances and are no basis for planning your own career path.

[2] Usually these are on a central bulletin board. However, in one district office, one of the authors found them on the wall inside the superintendent's office. Apparently, while not violating the letter of the law, he did not want to lose good personnel to better-paying neighbors.

In selecting districts, should you decide to look outside your own, keep in mind that the size of the district has little bearing on the availability of positions. Some large districts are "closed"; one very large district in Florida, for example, requires that anyone at all coming into their system, regardless of previous experience, spend five years in a classroom in that district before being considered for any level of administrative position.

Nor does the existence of an "administrative" pool necessarily preclude the possibility of openings. In one large district, for example, the one pool is so loosely constructed that anyone can be in it for the asking, allowing the administration to hire whom they choose. In a neighboring district, just as large, it is so difficult to enter the pool that, when openings do occur, there are often no viable applicants available in the pool, so the search must move outside the district.

Districts with the most promise are those where the population is expanding and new schools are being opened every other year because the entire system is growing. Districts less likely to have openings are those where the population is shrinking. Other districts where openings may be less frequent, or tenuous at best, are areas that have suffered a major economic setback. for example, the loss of a major industry or military base.

State leadership meetings and other professional meetings where administrators gather are excellent informal sources not only about job openings but also about the "economic health" of districts. Even before you are ready to take the step of applying for a job, try to identify people who seem to be "in the know." Try to identify people from districts

you think you would like to join. There is an old Spanish saying, "You never know out of which bush the bunny will jump." You never know from what source you might find a position.

Applying for the Job

Probably the first formal contact a prospective employer will have with you will be on paper. Even in a district where you are working, in most instances formal application procedures are expected and followed. In addition to any application forms you are required to fill out, it is essential that you have a well-written resume organized in standard format so that it gives an immediate impression of professionalism. If you do not have access to a word processor or a laser jet printer, pay to have a resume done up properly. Strike-overs and white-outs are not acceptable, and neither are misspellings. Penciled notes in the margin are not acceptable. A chatty "This is who I am" is not acceptable.

Be sure that the information you include is accurate and relevant. Include all that you can, listed under the proper categories. Include your community organizations: Garden Club. Include your school service activities: career education project for middle schoolers, Spring 1993.

But do not try to hype nor misrepresent experiences. Chairman of the Garden Club Bake Sale is not administrative experience. Conducting a career education project is experience, but it is not "administrative" experience to an administrator. Do not list meetings you have attended unless you were a presenter. You may, however, include organizational memberships in their proper place.

Whether or not you include your family in your resume, and whether or not you name your family, is a debatable point. In the business world, it is common to see resumes that name not only the wife, but give her maiden name and educational background as well. One sees resumes that not only list the children by age, but also list all their given names.

Since women are always vulnerable to the suspicion that they are really homebodies for whom a job is a part-time priority, we would recommend that you limit your personal information to "Married" or "Single," since this information for a variety of reasons is important to an employer and will be found out anyway. How you happen to be single (never wed, divorced, widowed) cannot legally be asked of you and should not be supplied. Nor can an interviewer ask about your civil state.

Because having your own children is a plus in the corporate world of education, we would also recommend you list your children, but do it succinctly: "3 children, ages 10-14." A brief listing of hobbies is also advisable, since it gives the initial screeners some small feel for the personal you.

You will need references, of course. Some colleges and universities offer a placement service for their graduates which you would do well to investigate. This service will keep your records on file and will enter into your file any letters of recommendation as they arrive.[3] When you are ready to make serious application for a position, the placement office will, for a standard fee, activate your file and send copies of it to whatever addresses you request. The material stays on file, so that a few years later, when you are ready to move up, you can once again activate the file as you seek a new position.

It is also to your advantage, once you have established yourself in any position, including the one you are in right now, to ask well-disposed administrators to write you a letter for your file and send it or have them send it to the placement office. If the Placement Office keeps files confidential, ask the writer to send the letter directly. Many people feel they can be more honest if you are not going to read what they wrote. In any event, make sure the price of the stamp is borne by you!

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[3] But not your transcripts; they must be obtained from the Registrar's Office; make sure you know the current fee on that particular campus.

This gathering up of recommendations is good insurance against the day when you need these letters but realize that the people who might have had the best things to say about you, or knew you longest, are off in other jobs. Or perhaps you are the one in another job, and the people "back there" have not kept your image glowing as brightly in their memory as you might wish, so their letter about you is less glowing than you might wish.

In selecting references, try to get a span of people. Try to have references from both men and women. Try to have references from different levels of administration. If you have worked with only one administration to date, perhaps there is a professor or two from your past who still remembers you, especially if you call or visit him/her with your request for a letter. Above all, choose credible references. The word of your bowling league buddies or even your faculty lounge chums, however worthy these individuals may be, enjoys little credibility as a professional reference.

Do abstain from asking for a recommendation from someone who may be highly credible but who hardly knows you. Chatting with you at a conference does not give the "credible person" any knowledge of your on-the-job performance. In the face of your misguided request, this person has only two alternatives: 1) to refuse, or 2) to write one of those say-nothing letters that "damn by faint praise."

When you do make formal application for a position, it is a courtesy to advise your principal or, in a district office, the appropriate supervisor that you are applying for another position. It is seldom advisable to announce to everyone around that you are applying. If you do get the job, you can have the fun of surprising them. If you do not, you save yourself the excuses and explanations. You also avoid the label of "job market whore," that is, one who routinely threatens "I'm applying elsewhere" as a gambit to jockey for raises and promotions in the current job. This gambit quickly loses its gloss. The current employer usually sees through the game by

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the second time around and is irritated by the blackmail. The potential employer is irritated at having wasted time and resources interviewing the false applicant. Soon enough the word is out, and this person is hanging to the flagpole by his/her fingernails.

There is a common belief in the corporate world of business that you should make three contacts with a prospective employer. Certainly, in our corporate world of education, you would be wise to make two, but never more than three. Educators are especially adverse to hard-sell. Perhaps you might send in your application, then call to make sure it arrived and was complete. Do not speak only with the receptionist; talk at least to the secretary of the person who will do the interview. Keep the conversation pleasant, but do not attempt to prolong it in a pathetically obvious attempt to garner good will. You are simply reminding them of your existence, subtly.

When do you confide in your supervisor about your intentions? You do not need to tell anyone when you first make contact or fill out an application. There may be dozens of applications for that job from people with more glittering resumes and you are never even interviewed. There may already be someone "in the job" and the search is a mere legality.

It is time to inform your superior when you are first contacted to be interviewed, either in person or by phone. Once in a while, a district or institution conducting a mere "paper search" will arrange some token interviews, wasting your time and alerting your employer to your interest in other jobs, all for nothing. If you have the misfortune to be ensnared by this kind of unethical behavior, chalk it up to experience.

Normally, you should always observe the courtesy of letting your supervisor or employer know that you are being interviewed. Then, if you are asked by your prospective employer whether he/she may call your current employer, you can answer, "Yes, they know I am interviewing for this position." You have now gained a double advantage. You have given potential employers the impression that they are dealing with an honest, forthright individual. You have prevented your current employer from expressing astonishment, irritation, or disbelief on the phone, which would create a negative impression.

If you have the misfortune to be working for someone who will seize the opportunity to thwart you and destroy any chance you have of slipping out from under his/her thumb, thwart him/her instead and tell his/her superior that you are going to an interview.

This person will no doubt ask, "Does Mr./Ms. McNasty know that you're interviewing?" You answer obliquely, "No, I believed it would be better to tell you." If pressed, say honestly, "I rather he/she didn't know." If pressed further, *decline* to comment. This is *not* the time to list your grievances against an unjust, oppressive supervisor. You could lose what good will you might have "upstairs." Besides, McNasty's superior should figure it out, and if the superior does not, it won't do you any good anyway.

If jumping up a level is not possible, because the levels are too separated, or because you've never really dealt with the next person "upstairs," then you will have to ask your potential employers to check any references you have listed, but you would appreciate their not calling your present place of employment. If the person interviewing you probes further, tell this potential employer frankly that your immediate superior is one reason you wish to look elsewhere. Once again, *decline* to comment further! The interviewer should respect your professionalism and your tactful reluctance to gossip, backstab, or tattle. That should suffice to close the topic. If it does not, you might want to wonder why it does not.

Before you go to your interview

Have your mind made up, before you go to the interview, as to whether or not you would accept the job if it were offered. If you need to look over the community or find out about the district, do so before the day of the interview. If you need to talk it over with your family, do so before the day of the interview. If you need to check out housing possibilities, do so before the day of the interview. Some districts proceed at a turtle's pace, others run with the wind. Either way, when a position is offered, from the employer's perspective he/she is offering you the gift of opportunity. If you as the chosen candidate stall, shuffle, and delay, even if eventually you decide to accept, there is a tinge of negativism established that will not soon vanish.

Maybe you are very familiar with the district, but if you are not, there are some facts that you will want to weigh. For example, is the district economically "sound"? Were fifty teachers just released for economic reasons? Have there been no raises for the past three years? Is it a bedroom community with no real tax base? Is its one main industry and tax base about to be shut down? Are enrollments dropping as residents migrate to the Sun Belt? Is there a large percentage of persons with no vested interest in the public schools, either because they have no children or their children are in private schools, that has resulted in tax cutbacks and financial difficulties?[4]

Is the district politically sound? Have parents recently boycotted the schools for two months? Were riot squads on campus last spring to quell racial wars? Did all the top management just get fired? Did five principals just resign in protest to board policies? Is the superintendent at war with the school board? Is there a pitched battle with the union?[5]

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[4] Naturally, Florida with its high incidence of elderly and transients comes to mind, but Florida is not alone. The Charleston school district in South Carolina, for example, with its large military bases and with commuter bedroom communities outside the county, in the late 1980's estimated that a scant 25% of the adult population had children to put in Charleston schools.

How is the social health of the district? Has it been rocked recently by scandal that can impair your administrative performance? Cases in point: the superintendent absconded with megafunds, leaving the district destitute and several administrators suspect. The high school principal was just indicted for poisoning his wife and half the community blames a woman in the district office. A male teacher ran his (male lover, an assistant principal, off the road in a near-fatal car crash and a witch hunt is on for other closet lovers. Whether or not these scandals will effect your hoped-for job depend on specific circumstances. But you need to know.

What are the community values, and can you work within those parameters? For example, is this community in an old-timey Bible Belt that has a stranglehold on the curriculum, ousting Tarzan and Jane because they were not married in the church and throwing out classical fairy tales because they frighten children?[6] Is the community a yuppie-group stronghold whose children must be held inviolate, no matter what their offense? Does the local paper lead the pack for weekly school-bashing? Buy a paper and scan it. Go to the local library and scan several.

Realize that your first administrative job will not be the prize of prizes, but be wary of these extraneous circumstances that could impair your premier performance. No one can start a climb standing in quicksand.

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[5] One much sought-after principal from the south was one of three final candidates for the principalship of a prestigious New York high school. When he interviewed with the union representatives, as he phrased it, "They had met the enemy, and it was me." He removed himself from the running, because to him teamwork between faculty and administration was the key to the notable success of his career. He accepted instead the position of assistant superintendent of a prosperous district in Virginia.

[6] Cases in point are from California and West Virginia districts, specifically.

Arriving for Your Interview

Naturally, when you arrive at the interview, you will have dressed appropriately, according to the tastes and expectations of the interviewers, not your own. You will have probably dressed a little more formally than for a teaching position interview. You will have avoided prints with big, gaudy flowers, sequined platform sandals, and five-inch dangle earrings. You will have left at home your ultra-long false eyelashes, your neon green luminescent eye shadow, your red mesh stockings, and your golden slave anklet. You may very well have selected the well known "power blue" for your best "power image," possibly a blue tailored suit and sensible heels.

We offer only two small suggestions for your physical image which, like it or not, in first impressions plays such an important role. We would recommend that, in your effort to give the physical impression of a competent administrator, you not appear too "corporate." A too-corporate look gives a first impression of someone who embodies those aspects of the business world which, as we discussed earlier, are not popular in the corporate world of education. You do not want to appear homespun, either, but a soft, pretty, in-between look, the image of a woman who is competent, yes, but also caring, perceptive and comfortable with her femininity. You are a woman. If you are not comfortable with the fact, no one else will be.

We also recommend strongly the "comfortable" aspect of how you dress. If you are not comfortable with your outfit, your discomfort shows with painful transparency. Choose an outfit that you can put on, confirm with satisfaction your image in the mirror, and then forget. Your mind needs to be free to concentrate on the substance of the interview, the people, the questions, the atmosphere, and not on whether or not your skirt has ridden up too high on your thighs or your neckline has fallen open.

You will, of course, arrive *alone.* If for some reason it has been necessary to drive to the interview with children, a spouse, or a friend, leave them in the car. Let them walk around the pond. Deposit them at the nearest fast food establishment. *Never* take them into the building with you. You will not impress anyone with your administrative potential because your children are cute and you're a wonderful mother. Nor does the school, unlike some other corporations, have a keen interest in the presentability of your spouse.

You are in the corporate world of education, where teachers stand alone in their classrooms and administrators fulfill unique and separate responsibilities. If you cannot manage an interview on your own, unpropped and unencumbered, potential employers are going to doubt seriously that you could do the job without props or encumberments.[7]

You will, of course, be punctual. The Japanese make it a point to arrive at appointments 15 minutes early. Actors often observe the 15-minute-early rule for auditions and rehearsal. However, too early an arrival, in our world, regulated as it is by bells and cement-clad schedules, suggests over-anxiousness or a woefully empty calendar.

You will tell the secretary who you are, why you have arrived, and the exact time of your appointment. She may know immediately why you are there, but do not expect her to know. There is an implied arrogance in that expectation.

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[7] This unfortunate error has also been noted in men. One of the authors interviewed two different men who arrived in the large, outer office with their respective wives; while the husband came in to the interview, in both cases the wife sat assessing the secretaries, the office visitors, and the magazine selections. The author did not hire, nor, frankly, even seriously consider, interviewees who needed so much help.

You will remain unruffled if you must wait. If the secretary obviously has much work to complete, do not waste her time with idle conversation. On the other hand, if she seems to want to talk, oblige her. You may find out additional information of interest. Or the secretary may be the first level of the interview. Whether such is the case or not, assume that the secretary has the ear of the boss, and know that she can torpedo you after you leave with a few well chosen words or a single gesture.

You will be gracious not only to the secretary, but to the receptionist and any other humans you meet while you wait. Remember that you are in alien land; you have no idea who is the power. Remember that beneath the visible power structure there lies a hidden hierarchy, determined by a wide range of factors. The adolescent filing clerk may be the school board chairman's niece. The receptionist may be the wife of the high school principal whose voice echoes loudly in that district. And then, who knows who may be sleeping with whom?! If there is going to be pillow talk about you, ensure that it is positive by your being so gracious (but not groveling!) to one and all.

If at all possible, it is helpful to find out, *subtly*, something about the background of your interviewer(s). One of the authors (subtly) extracted the information while she waited, chatting with the secretary, that her interviewer had a fine arts background. Naturally, during the interview she drew many (but not too many!) examples from arts education.

The Interview

In the interview itself, you're on your own. You will of course, know the name(s) of the interviewer(s) and shake hands, but not with a the grip of weight lifter. You will keep eye contact, but not with the steadfast stare of a professional hypnotist. You will be relaxed, because you look your best and you have prepared yourself to be there.

You will be accepting of any kind of interview format that this system chooses to throw at you. Do they want some simulations, such as writing memos and responding to a hypothetical in-basket? Smilingly, you are pleased to comply, demonstrating by action that you are flexible person, able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Do they want you to meet others who might be on the staff? Smilingly, you greet them, as befits a caring, perceptive educator, realizing that you are at least getting serious attention and other people's time is being spent on you. You do not, as one young woman candidate did during an interview for a state consultant position, glare at the people streaming in and comment, "What's this? Ganging up on me?" No, and not hiring you either, dear.

If the system requires that you return to interview at the next level of the hierarchy, smilingly you consent, with nary a whine about having to get baby-sitters, or having to see if you can get your husband to drive you. Hopefully, you will genuinely feel smiling and gracious. The fact that you are being interviewed in person gives you one hand on the flagpole; the longer the interview, the more secure your grip.

You avoid being led into personal gossip or criticism of anyone where you currently work. One thing, in giving an example of negative or unproductive behavior, is to say, "I remember one English teacher who.... I believe I would have handled it differently." It is quite another to say, "At our school, Ms. Simms... I couldn't believe she was so stupid!" Even if the interviewers seem to be enjoying the conversation about this person and that, upon reflection they will remember you as a waggle-tongued gossip. Administrators do not want gossips on their staff.

However, it is a good ploy to broach, at an appropriate time, the topic of money. Men do it; women should, too. If the information is not volunteered, ask about the salary range is. Ask if there are benefits. This is professional and business-like; in this, all corporate worlds are the same.

Do not, however, ask about vacations, time off, or personal time to pursue courses. The practices regarding annual and sick leave will be standard, with little variation. Personal time is not yours to covet until you have demonstrated ample performance time. If asked whether you plan to continue to take courses, answer honestly, but be sure to let the interviewer know that you will do the job first and pursue your personal development second.

We would urge you above all to be your professional self. Never try to fake answers or pretend to knowledge you don't have. If, for example, Gregorc's learning styles are mentioned, if you don't know what they are, don't take the chance that the interviewer doesn't, either. The interviewer does know or wouldn't have asked the question, and by faking an answer you will take yourself out of the running immediately.[8]

If you attempt to give answers that you think the interviewers want, you are serving no purpose. In fact, you may be talking yourself into an untenable situation. For example, if you are interviewing for the position of kindergarten consultant and you believe strongly that many kindergarteners are ready for and should begin reading books, you gain nothing by fudging on your answers and finding yourself in a system dedicated to obliterating all reading material from kindergarten classrooms. If you are applying for assistant principal in a middle school and you believe strongly that interscholastic athletics can damage middle schoolers, you will not be happy in a system where fourth graders start weight-training and the high school football coach uses the middle school as his expansion team. You may even get a devil's advocate type of interviewer who deliberately puts forth an opposite view, seeing if he or she can lure you into expounding ideas that he or she does not embrace.[9]

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[8] One male candidate, when asked about Anthony Gregorc, immediately began to refer to him as "Tony," then demonstrated he hadn't a clue about "Tony's" learning style theories. No, we did not hire him; curiously, another office (headed by a man) did. How did the new employee work out? Just as you might predict. Not very well.

The interviewers, especially if they are good administrators, are putting together, or keeping together, a team. They know what they need to get what they consider to be the right balance of staff. You need to be who you are. If you fit, you'll be hired. If you don't, you won't, and you wouldn't be happy if you were. You would soon be job-hunting again and begin to acquire that most lethal resume pattern of all: the short-term job-hopper.

Assessing the assessor

The interview, as perhaps you are already well aware, is not a one-way communication. As the interviewers assess your potential for the position, you are assessing the position's potential for your career. Before you accept any new position, most especially if that position is your premier step into administration, you want to ensure, as much as possible, that it offers you a reasonably successful boost up the flagpole.

What about the job itself? Are the job responsibilities defined with reasonable clarity? If there is a written job description, ask for it and read it.[10] If there is no written job description, gloss over the fact, since you have unfortunately pointed out a flaw in office procedures and the interview is not a good time to do that.[11] However, the interviewer should be

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9 Dr. Charlie Williams, former State Superintendent of Education in South Carolina, was a master of this technique, merrily gulling the weak of principle, cheerily entrapping the too eager to please. Naturally, those of us who wanted our candidates to find favor warned them of this little trick. Even so, we all found it unnerving every time we went through it.

10 You will find as the "last item" on any minimally adequate description: "... other duties as assigned." This is a standard disclaimer and no cause for alarm.

11 District offices, like many businesses, offer a wide variety of systemic sophistication, from highly computerized complexity to, as one of the author's friends discovered the first day on her job as Assistant

able to tell you what the expectations of you will be in the position.

One of the most important assessments you should make during your interview is of the interviewers themselves. Do you like the people you are meeting? As we all know, the "people environment" can make or break any job in any field.

Are there "high flyers" from whom you can continue to learn the administrative craft? What about your immediate superior? Is he (possibly she) competent and willing to let those beneath him/her shine? Or is this a weak person who will use subordinates as dumping grounds, shields, and excuses? Or is this a glory-grabber who will let you, as a woman, do the work, and then step forth, The Man in Charge, to claim the credit, expecting you to blend quietly into the background?[12]

If your immediate (future) superior is a person you feel you cannot respect, you probably would do well not to pursue the position. If your immediate (future) superior is a total incompetent, and this may even be "confided" to you during the interview, do not be so naive as to believe he/she will soon vanish. If the person is incompetent and the interviewers know it, obviously they have done nothing about it and are unlikely to do anything about it. You are seeking a position as an administrator, not a patsy.

If possible, also try to find out where the people are who held the position before. Did they move up? Were they recruited for a higher position by a rival district? Were they moved off to the side into some dead end? Or did they drop off the flagpole altogether?

Superintendent for Instruction, an entire file of personnel folders with nothing in them but a handful of restaurant and gas receipts and an occasional contract, outdated.

[12] One of the authors, not by choice but by a re-shuffling of personnel, had this type; any directive that looked dubious he gave to her, but once it was on the road to success, he not only took it over but her out of it completely. Unhappily, he is a type, not one of a kind.

What is the current status of women in the district? If all the administrators are men, this is not necessarily negative. Both authors have occupied positions not held previously by women. If a district is trying to struggle into the 21st century, don't hold it against them. Help them out!

On the other hand, if there are women administrators who have been very unsuccessful and created a murky outlook for other women, or if women in the district are clearly pigeonholed into almost para-professional roles, their titles notwithstanding, you may need to re-think your interest.

If there are incompetent men administrators being allowed to function on forever, they can constitute the classic situation where you do the work, they get the credit. On the other hand, if the district or school is "under new management" and trying to clean house, this augurs well for your own success, for you are getting in on the ground floor. As with all decisions, the more information you can get, openly or discreetly, the better chance you have of making a good decision.

Of course, you may be a person who thrives on plunging into troubled waters and seizing the sinking raft. Best of luck! But if you are a less battle-ready individual, and again, especially if this is your first step into administration, we would suggest you avoid troubled districts. The risk you run is twofold. You may find that you are in a position in which you cannot function as you should, which will make you seem less able than you really are. You may also find that you are aboard a sinking ship that takes you down with it. Neither option, as a reputedly mediocre talent or as a drowned rat, will enhance your resume nor your opportunities for other positions.

The ideal position is one that will both use your skills and develop them, working with congenial colleagues and supervisors in a growing district where opportunities will develop for advancement under an economically, politically, and socially stable administration that works in harmony with the community, the union if it has one, and the school board.

Naturally, such a combination of ideal conditions is rare. As the potential employer evaluates you, you will need to evaluate the mix of conditions that constitute the fabric of that particular work environment. Should the position be offered, is it one that you will you accept? If you accept this position, will you be able to pursue it with professional commitment for at least two years?

If your answer is yes, and the job is offered, you are on the flagpole. Your next task is to begin your upward climb.

CHAPTER 5

Getting a Good Grip

Those first few days

Your career as administrator has begun. You have obtained a place on the flagpole. Your first few weeks may be the busiest ones you have ever spent. Besides the immediate demands of the job itself, you will also have several job-initiating tasks that cannot be accomplished soon enough. You were able to establish your credibility as an administrator with those who hired you. You must now establish that same credibility with everyone else. While it will take time to develop their trust and respect, it is important not to ignore the impact of "first impressions." Subsequent attitudes towards you can helped along if you have made a good initial impression.

Your New Office

The look of your office is one first-impression step towards projecting a desirable image. You want your office to reflect your image. In these first few days, it is to your benefit for even the casual passer-by to realize that someone new has taken charge.

Hopefully, you will have some space to call your own. In a school setting, you should have an office or "half" an office. In a district office, you may have an office without walls, such as the one that so beleaguered Les Nesman on *WKRP* that he put tape on the floor to show where walls should be and required people to knock on air to enter. You may have a beehive, masonite partition situation. If there is no space at all for you, except borrowed, you do need to acquire some in the most diplomatic way possible. Although it is true that corporate space wars are not very relevant to the corporate world of education, even a school administrator needs space. It is difficult to be a teacher without a room, pushing your cart down the halls; it is nigh impossible to be taken seriously as an administrator if you are a "floater."

If at all possible, the weekend before the Monday that you begin, or at least as soon as your new "space" is available to you, give your office or office space a new look. Let there be visible evidence, when everyone walks in that next day, that there is a new occupant, a new regime, a new era, at least within the parameters of your responsibility.

Just as you took care to dress the part when you came to your interview, now you need to dress your office (space) so that it makes an equally "professional, yet caring educator" impression.

You will want to give some thought to the arrangement of your furniture. Do you want the desk to serve as a barrier between you and anyone who walks in? Or do you prefer to swivel around and face your visitors as they sit down in chairs to one side of your desk? Do you want to have a view to the outer office(s), or do you want more privacy? Do you need to be able to move easily between desk and computer?

In arranging your office, particularly if it is in a school building, corporate business rules are of little use. Your primary goal is not to intimidate and overwhelm, but to welcome and pacify. You cannot, for example, take up half the office space by moving your desk almost to the center, leaving visitors the poor man's share of space. Some guests may be combatants, so you will want them seated apart, not in physical proximity.

You may have upset or concerned parents in your office who should feel comfortable, not crowded.

One very successful superintendent took pride that any parent who came in after work, dirt-stained and sweaty in his work clothes, left that office "feeling as if he were wearing a tuxedo."[1]

Does your office exude an air of clean-lined competence, or is it helplessly heaped and huddled? Are there shelves, tables, and other "stuff" that can be eliminated to cut down on clutter, or something that needs to be added to break the barren, storeroom-decor walls? Can anything be traded off or scavenged from elsewhere around the school or district office? Eliminate or hide as best you can anything resembling a carton or a stack of papers. This may require creativity if your office is short on storage space, but the office full of papers and boxes gives a definite aura of a person whose job has overwhelmed her. On the other hand, someone who has handled her own office space seems to have more promise of being able to handle larger tasks.

Unlike the corporate world of business, decorating your office does not mean hauling in a bushel of status symbols. You will not be dealing with many $100,000-a-year men. You will in large part be dealing with $18-28,000-a-year women. Women who have to budget carefully to make sure there is milk on the table for their children will not be pleasantly impressed by your $2500 desk and original oil paintings.

Even though you are a woman, or because you are, we would advise caution about filling your office with a flock of painted porcelain shepherdesses or galleries of family photos. If you need curtains, there is a wide variety of suitable ones, but none of them are made of flowered chintz. We are not suggesting that, to hold your own in a male-dominated world, you buy a pair of antlers and a stuffed pheasant for your office.[2]

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[1] Most parents respond to professionalism and courtesy, and a few must be settled down by threatening to end the conference on the spot. Only rarely must one meet force with greater force, such as one principal who, when a father threatened him with physical violence, stood up to his full 6-foot-five and said in a firm, quiet voice, "I don't think so." Women: unless you regularly attend Thai kick-boxing classes, call in the deputy.

On the other hand, homey and cutesy, no matter how comfy you feel in it, will not convey the message of professional competence that you need to project. We would personally include cutesy posters in this category; they are splendid for the classroom, but just too darn cute for the administrator's inner office. The outer office, especially if it is student-frequented, can withstand posters, but try to ensure they are positive, as opposed to "I hate Mondays!" and "Get me out of here!" messages.

A few well chosen items for both wall and desk/shelf top that express you, your style, your interests, even your hobbies are suggested. You may prefer to imitate many of your male counterparts and display awards and degrees, briskly framed. You do not necessarily have to incur heavy expenses to decorate appropriately. Some principals decorate their offices with student art, very selectively chosen by them, matted and framed to become a permanent part of "The Principal's Collection."

You may or may not have your own secretary, but if you do, the appearance of her desk and its environment also gives the passer-by subtle clues about you. However you can accomplish it, you want her to reflect your own professional image, with personal allowances, since her job has many fewer intrinsic rewards and a much lower pay scale of extrinsic rewards. If she (and it is 98% sure to be a she) has a clutter of baby pictures on her desk, for example, let them be. They may be the one thing that reminds her of why she puts up with her job.

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[2] The worst office one of the authors ever had the dubious pleasure of visiting had football wallpaper and a chair full of sweaty football shoulder pads. "Just shove that stuff aside," urged the aging principal, delighted with his self-decorated "jock" image.

On the other hand, if she has a clutter of used styrofoam cups strewn in among her documents, you need to revise that image. You may simply ask her not to drink coffee at her desk, or you may tell her you feel it is important that she not clutter her desk, or you may cleverly provide her with a coffee mug. If her desk has papers piled all around it, you can improve it by providing her attractive stackers and sorters, which you will explain as how you prefer to work, or which you will request because you may need to find something in her absence. Most secretaries appreciate new gadgets for their desk, so yours will have a new little status something to show off, rather than a meddling new boss to tell off.

Affirming Your Credibility with People

Your ultimate relationships with the people around you will be and should be forged over a period of time. But in your first few days on the job, there are some ground rules that must be laid down so that you will be able to build desirable working relationships. A bad mistake at this embryonic point in your career can hound you unnecessarily for months or even years beyond.

How you go about imprinting your new image on those around you is very different depending on whether you have been promoted within your same organization or whether you have been employed in a new organization. The advantages and disadvantages of each are almost exactly opposite, requiring somewhat different tasks of you.

Same Old Parking Space, Same Old Faces

If you have been promoted from within, you have an invaluable advantage, because you have worked in this system, you have had first-hand experience with its good and bad features and, consequently, you know what you would like to change. You also know the people.... or do you?

One first-few-days phenomenon that assaults almost every new administrator is the new dimensions that appear so suddenly from behind those familiar old faces. You need to be prepared for this administrative twilight zone and handle it tactfully. Because you will have different personalities and different hidden agenda in your specific situation, we can only hint at what may await you.

Of course you would expect to have a whole flock of new "best friends" as soon as you are anointed.[3] Even your best friend will have new "best friends" as everyone jockeys for position on the inside track. These new best friends, when you have already worked with them, are very easy to identify. Because they are so easy to identify and their reaction is so predictable, your only problem will be not to laugh. It is important that you pretend that you don't realize what they're up to. "Open the gate and let them all back into the fold."

There are a significant smattering of totally unexpected reactions that, if you are unprepared for them, can be dismaying. One less attractive feature of the "new best friend" syndrome is the surprise identities of those who will sidle into your office, close the door, and reveal some deadly deed, past or present (committed by someone else, of course!) that you "really

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3 Unfortunately, if you are in a system with a strong, hostile teachers' union, you will automatically have new enemies.

need to know." Our advice is to accept it as information, be kind, be courteous, and forget it as soon as the tattler leaves the office. Tattlers' motives are seldom altruistic!

The "now I'm going to get my way" is probably the most frequent wellspring of unexpected and depressing behaviors in people you thought you knew. What is regrettable about it is that usually it appears in those who have been closest to you. It usually appears within the first week, if not the first day of your tenure, and is subject to a wide variety of expressions because of the wide range of what any one individual means by "my way."

For one apparently very professional lady, well respected in her field, "my way" meant having her own secretary rather than sharing. As a result, before one of the authors had been in her new office one whole day, this woman was sitting with her behind closed doors, sobbing hysterically that if she didn't have her own secretary, she would resign.

For another, "my way" meant submitting a list of nearly fifty weekend events that she felt she should cover and for which she demanded compensatory time. Since there were only 240 working days, her 75 "comp days" would wreak havoc with a basic 8-5 working office schedule. She threw quite a tantrum when she was told "not possible."

For another, "my way" meant allowing him to travel out to districts whether they wanted him there or not. His secret agenda was a private interest in "selling" a particular program to districts. He had such high hopes that a new administrator, and a woman at that, would be easily gulled, that his resentment at being told "no" never did really heal.

For another, "my way" meant using her friend, newly ascended to power, to get back at all the teachers she was mad at. She became vindictive, a constant tattler, and quick to tell off anyone whom she perceived as "less professional." After all, she was on the inside track! She had the ear of the administration!

For another, "my way" meant getting an administrator to patrol her particular hall, even though the principal had already turned down this "intensive security" request. After all, a new administrator (in this case, a man) probably wouldn't know that the idea had already been trashed, so with a great batting of eyes and many a winsome smile, the teacher hurried into the office to get her way.

For another, "my way" meant immediate withdrawal from her classes of students she did not like, and for another, "my way" meant taking sick days to play golf because his doctor had told him he needed to relax. For another "my way" meant being approved for extensive time in a district where he was having an affair with a school employee,[4] and for another "my way" meant letting her choose the departmental textbooks.

In short, there are aspects of your long-time colleagues you do not know, either because of confidentiality that the "upper levels" did not make public, or because you were not in such a good position to do favors before now. "I thought I knew these people!" cried one man who, after sixteen years in the same job, moved into an administrative capacity in the same office.

How can you combat this? You cannot stop it. It will happen. You can, however, be forewarned. You can be tolerant, but not malleable, for if you give in to any of these "inside tracker" requests, you will never be rid of them. If you consent once, you will be able to dissent only with the greatest of bitterness and hostility. "Boy, that job's really gone to her head!" your former friend will say at every opportunity.

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[4] Naturally, this was not the reason he gave, but his new administrator's supervisor, not a gossip by nature, had warned her of the situation.

You can also hold fast to the thought, as a wave of negativism washes over you, that this, too, will pass, and your friends will once again emerge in your perception with all those shining qualities that made them your friends in the first place.

You can also enjoy the ways in which you have, without lifting a finger, improved in their eyes. One of the authors has been told by several people that since she came into her new position, she is "even dressing much more professionally." Actually, she didn't have a single new dress. Your IQ will suddenly soar. Suggestions that you used to toss out to deaf ears will now be heard, discussed, and even praised. Automatically with your new title comes a new image among those old, familiar faces. Pretend not to notice the change. And try not to giggle!

The Enigma of New Faces

Caution! A pleasant smile, a courteous reception, a doubtful ear! These are the weapons of the administrator, and most especially the woman administrator, as she walks into a brand new set of faces. Your old friends know you and wonder if the job will change you. These people don't know anything about you. They are all apprehensive, and the more line authority you have over them, the more apprehensive they will be. If you come into the school as a "dean of student services" you won't find nearly as much apprehension as if you come in as "The Principal."

This is true for any administrator. But an elementary school maintenance man said it all when he

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looked up, saw one of the authors who had just arrived as the new principal, and unable to stifle the thought, cried loudly, "Jesus Christ! It's a woman!" The author continued on to her office, to find on her desk three immediate resignations, all men. Her courteous, professional smile was strained that day. But she hung onto it, and so must you, if you are going to establish parameters in which you can build positive working relations.

The most difficult problem you face, as you walk into your office that first day among strangers, is that you don't know the power centers. Just as when you first arrived to your interview, you were cautious and courteous to all, so must you begin your new job. Just as would have happened had you moved up within your own circle, you will be bombarded with "my way" folks, tattlers, and "new best friends." The bombardment will be more severe because you don't know who's who, and they know you don't. To make matters more challenging, you are a woman, and thus, in the perception of some, more easily gulled.

We would make two suggestions. One, treat everyone the same. If you closet yourself with A, make sure that everyone has equal time. If you visit B's room, get to all of them, or at least announce you'll be coming around. If you listen to the concerns of one grade level or one department, listen to them all, or publish a schedule to do so. Give yourself time, by whatever ploys you can, to learn the ins and outs of the informal power structure. You may not wish to abide by it. You may need to change it. But that will come later. Before you can do anything at all, you must first learn what it is.

Secondly, make your own judgments. We personally would advise against soliciting opinions from other people, either about situations or about individuals. One of the few advantages is that you meet these new people purely from your current job perspective. You will not suffer the pain of readjusting old relationships.

The great disadvantage, of course, is that you have no way of distinguishing, as the "new girl on the block," who is being honest and who is not. You do not know who of your peers or subordinates is resentful and who is merely apprehensive, for it is a given that you are an unknown quantity that will directly effect their professional lives. You do not even know who is simply brusque of personality and who is being intentionally rude. You do not know who is loading the dice against a rival, or who is trying to pull you over to one faction in a divided staff. In one high school, the "old guard" and "new guard" were at such odds that between them they destroyed three principals before one arrived who, with the cooperation of the superintendent, transferred the ringleaders elsewhere.

There will be those who aspired to your position, whose potential for advancement you have just diminished. But you do not know which of them may professionally accept you and which will attempt to sabotage you. Nor can you believe everyone who says, "They offered me your job, but I turned it down." That seems to be a favorite phrase of the total loser. You do not even necessarily know who they are, since in our experience a man's modest or non-existent talent has no relation at all to his ambitious dreams of grandeur.

There are so many hidden agendas, some conscious, some actually unconscious, but none of them to your advantage. When one of the authors asked one state's first woman district superintendent what was the hardest thing about her position, she answered flatly, unequivocally, and with feeling: "No one tells you the truth!" Note that her answer had nothing to do with the male-female issue. "No one" was an equal opportunity classification.

Consequently, it is prudent to be especially leery of the first-day "glad-hander." This is not the person who comes to "welcome you on board" or "wish you well" or says he/she is "glad to have you with us." These relatively sincere people come, smile, and leave. The glad-hander, on the other hand, stays. He (or it could be she) hangs around, offers advice, offers too much help, takes up too much time, is altogether "too too." A vintage travel book used to warn: "On shipboard, do not be eager to accept the first friendships offered. Quality people hold back." We have both found this to be true on shipboard. We have both found this to apply equally well to the first days on the job.

Need we remind you, women to women, to be especially on guard against (but always courteous to) Mr. Charm. Surely you know for yourself, but we are going to remind you, that this does not necessarily mean beware of the best looking man in the environment. Surely you have found out for yourself that there are men who perceive themselves as Mr. Charm but have apparently not looked in a mirror for years! Surely you have observed, quite as well as we have, that there are men who truly believe they can never be so old, so fat, or so bald that women are not quick to succumb to their charms, especially women who are no longer "young." If there are any of these in your new job environment, expect them to surface within the first week.

Your predecessor

Whether you are in a new place or an old one, and whatever your private thoughts may be, do avoid any criticism or any remark that could be interpreted as criticism of your predecessor, either professional or personal. You have nothing to gain. You may have a great deal to lose.

If your predecessor was competent, accept it and set about to exercise your own competency. If your predecessor was a beloved institution who resigned only because of failing health, do not try to tear down his parting image. You can certainly afford to praise some of his (possibly her) accomplishments. This person is not coming back to snatch the job from you. Nor do your remarks lock you into following in those same footsteps.

If your predecessor was incompetent, rejoice! Anything you do will look good. You will only tarnish your own splendor by allowing yourself to make, or to engage in listening to, snide comments about what a mess the file drawers were in, or why something had never been attended to before.

Your predecessor, however inept, probably still has a few friends hanging about who will resent your comparisons. Your predecessors declared enemies may very well have reason to resent and badmouth anyone in your new position, and that includes you! They may or may not be your friends! Time will tell. Meanwhile, let your predecessor professionally rest in peace. Be grateful that the comparisons that others will inevitably draw can only be in your favor.

Picking up the threads

Naturally, as you smilingly juggle all the people around you, you must also embark on the tasks at hand. How you proceed will depend a great deal on how your predecessor left the position. If your predecessor was a very professional, conscientious individual, you will find a paper trail to everything that is important for you to know. You will find schedules, dates, procedures, and perhaps even a personal note about upcoming priorities. If you are very fortunate, your predecessor, if available from some other position, may call once or twice to make sure you have found everything all right and to answer any specific questions that may have arisen.

If you have such good fortune, you have only to read, to study, and organize in your own way all the material most vital to the immediate job duties. If your school or district office is like most, you will have to exercise discretion as to what you need to learn quickly and what you can set aside. If, for example, you are a new principal in an elementary school, the *Administrators' Guide to School Nurses* may wait, but the *Defined Minimum Program K-6* cannot. The upcoming poster contest from the United States Post Office might need to take a back seat to statewide basic skills testing schedules, grades K, 1,2, and 5 for next week.

On the other hand, you may arrive to find the office stripped of every manual, every folder, and every computer disc. Perhaps your predecessor went to a better or newer school or to a college teaching position and took everything with him for his own use. Perhaps your predecessor went away mad and deliberately trashed the files. Perhaps your predecessor wanted whoever took his place to look bad, so that all would realize how grand he had been and wish that he had not moved on. Your predecessor may even have left some wrong information, through ignorance or malice. One of the authors discovered, the first day on the job, that an important federal grant had been "buried" and she had one day before the deadline to understand it, write it, submit it through in-house channels, and mail it off. Her predecessor had left the job very vexed.

In this case, or in the in-between situations where some things have been left in order, others left in limbo, you need first of all to find out from your immediate supervisor what is most important. What must be attended to immediately? What are due dates? What are the procedures to meet them? What things are due on a certain date *but* must first go through an approval process prior to that date? What needs to be approved by whom can make radical differences in your timetable, and if you do not allow for "up the channels" time, you can encounter your first administrative disaster.

If it happens that your immediate supervisor is also your predecessor, do be diplomatic! Do not suggest or imply that this person left things in a mess. Inquire and get the information you need, but phrase it cleverly, without reproach. Implied criticism of one's new supervisor is one way to start off on the wrong foot, and you may never get in step!

If you don't have an appointment calendar, get one. If yours is a complex job, get two, or even three. Let your secretary keep your appointment calendar. You keep your "must do" calendar. If you have a large staff with appointments of its own, keep that on a third calendar. Your first week of your own "must do" calendar should be filled, not before your first day, but at the end of your first day. Do write in pencil! Chances are excellent that by the end of the second day, you may need to revise.

Keep your first week goal clearly in view. Don't let it drown in a sea of details. Your goal is to get a secure footing so that you can begin to impose your own image on this new job. The first week is merely gripping the flagpole. Now you must start to establish your own position on the pole as you undertake and carry out your new responsibilities.

Chapter 6

Men and You on the Pole

Changing? Times

Twenty years ago, writing down some suggestions on how to deal with men in school administration would have been relatively simple. Twenty years from now, this chapter will probably be antiquated. Male-female relationships in the workplace are at the moment rife with cross-currents and ambiguities. As stated earlier, in the 1970's and early 1980's there was a dramatic increase in the number of women school administrators. In the late 1980's there was a decline that seems to be continuing in the early 1990's.

In 1992 *Psychology Today* published the results of some studies that indicate the phrase "You've come a long way, Baby!" might be more accurately stated, "Long way to go, Baby!" One team of researchers found that in six popular magazines[1], men and women were portrayed as unequal partners in two-thirds of the ads. The women's magazines portrayed women as subordinate to men in a 2:1 ratio. Another study of four major newspapers[2] found that in spite of the growth of women's athletics, fewer than 5% of the stories were devoted to women only; articles focusing on men outnumbered those about women by a ratio of 23:1, findings that paralleled the results of an earlier study that reviewed television coverage of women's sports.

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[1] Penny Belknap and Wilbert Leonard of Illinois State University examined *MS, Good Housekeeping, Rolling Stone, Sports Illustrated, GQ, and Time.* (*Psychology Today*, March-April, 1992, p.13)

[2] *USA Today, Boston Globe, Orange County Register, Dallas Morning News.* The study was conducted by the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles. These findings paralleled the results of a study one year earlier that reviewed television coverage of women's sports.

What does this mean for the woman school administrator? Men still dominate the field. Women still must prove themselves. The battle is still being waged. You really do have to be better than a man at the job. Men school administrators can and do often survive along a path of sub-standard performance. We could cite a fistful of cases in which the incompetent male was not fired but promoted from the school where he could do damage to the district level where his incompetence had less direct impact.[3]

Women school administrators rarely enjoy that luxury. On the contrary, it is more commonly observed that women are kept indefinitely at middle level management, workhorse positions while men are promoted. If a woman complains and demands an explanation, she may find herself with no position at all. Probably one of the more pronounced instances was that of a very competent high school principal who was moved to the district office but denied an assistant superintendancy for which she was well qualified. When the lady protested, she was "out," even though her brother was the mayor.

On the other hand and on a more cheerful note, even at some universities, bastions of bedrock male chauvinism where equality of faculty pay is treated with shocking flippancy,[4] some presidents are now coming under fire from the Board of Trustees as well as from the media for not having women in administrative positions.

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[3] As for some "promotions" at the state level, we could regale you with bizarre instances, but we fear the gentlemen might be recognizable and sue us for slander.

A Spectrum of Men

This ebb and flow of attitudes and actions regarding the male/female issue also means that, as you navigate your career through the sea lanes of school administration, you will encounter not "an attitude" but a plurality of attitudes among men. There are currently in the world of school administration many men who truly do not care whether a colleague is male or female; they care only that the colleague be competent.

We noted earlier the importance of entering school administration without a negative, combatant mentality towards men. If you do, you will only reinforce the prejudices of the unwashed who will never be born-again equal opportunity supporters, and you will alienate the "good guys" who are perfectly willing to be equal-footing colleagues with a woman, but not with someone who fires broadsides at them with unprovoked, unwarranted hostility.

Nor can you quickly categorize and classify which men are which. There are, out there, good old boys with necks of reddish hue who do accept women as colleagues, and they will accept you, too, if you don't jump to conclusions. There are, out there, suave, liberal charmers who resent you, do not acknowledge your authority, and would strangle on flattery before they would accept even a small administrative favor from you. And of course, there are a large number of men trying very hard to adjust to the new attitudes expected of them. These are the ones who may never be enthusiastic ERA advocates, but their minds will be eased and their confusion reduced once they see that you are competent. Be gentle with them. It is not easy to be a man in the 90's.

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[4] One instance that came to our attention in the late 1980's and that is woefully typical was an Associate Professor (with Ph.D.) of international repute and several years in the department who found she was making $500/year less than the starting salary of a brand new Ph.D. male Assistant Professor.

Nor have all women catapulted into the 90's. It would be a serious mistake to assume that women, because they are women, support your administrative ambitions. You may find that some of your true adversaries are women who deeply resent working for a woman. They want to work for a man, to whom they can whimper and pout and whom they can control by a batting of eyelashes and an occasional tear. Or they, like their male counterparts, have been raised to believe that men should be dominant, at home and at the office. You may find these ladies very disappointing, but they do exist. You need not ever to accede to them, but you do need to accept the fact that they are not of your same mind and may never be.

The Gossip Game

As one wise man once remarked to one of the authors, "People will talk about you even if they like you." This is more true for an administrator. The higher you climb, the more true it will be. Your every act becomes magnified, your every word rings with greater importance, your every friendship acquires dramatic overtones. Nothing you do can prevent this. Don't waste your time trying.

As a woman, you will be even more vulnerable than your male counterparts to gossip. How did you get the job? Who are you sleeping with that you got the promotion? Who are you sleeping with now that you have the promotion? Does your husband know? That someone who is your mentor, is he your lover, too? At the last principal's conference, were you sleeping with that man you were having dinner with? How about the one you were in animated conversation with in the hotel lobby? That certainly looked suspicious!

That may sound exaggerated, but it is not. One of the authors was told by her supervisor, in the 1980's, not to allow a certain woman to travel to a certain district because she was having an affair with the superintendent. When the author questioned the sanity of the accusation, given the two individuals involved, her supervisor assured her that those two had been seen (by one of the agency *men*, naturally!) having dinner together. The author did persuade her supervisor, who was a reasonable soul, that if every woman on the staff were having an affair with every male administrator with whom she shared a restaurant meal, none of them would have much time for work. As it turned out later, there had been not a shred of truth in the rumor, but it shows how the flames are fed.

Envious rivals and might-have-beens will also gossip about you for their own devious reasons. If they see that you are forming a good rapport with a male power figure, they will be quick to spread rumors about a liaison. This kind of gossip, once it reaches your ears, needs to be countered. Now, if you counter it by protests to one and all, heads will wag and Shakespeare will be quoted: "Methinks the lady protests too much!"

This gossip cannot be simply ignored. Silence gives consent, or at least, does nothing to mend the damage. One of the authors reacted to gossip about a mentor whom she used to visit at the office in the early morning by no longer dropping in for early morning chats and maintaining a discreet silence about the rumors, spread by someone who had aspired to the position. It was a mistake! The mentor did not understand why the visits suddenly stopped, the author lost a good friend, and the gossiper reigned triumphant. Don't you be so naive.

Now that you are an administrator whose actions are so much more in the spotlight, attempting to track down the source will probably also result in a kind of boomerang confirmation. Your best tactic, as with gossip regarding your earlier mentor, is to counter the rumor by mentioning it in a tone of ironic amusement, but never in outrage, to the gentleman involved, so that you thwart the gossiper's true intent: to destroy your developing rapport.

Keep in mind that men, too, are subject to these gossip campaigns. One especially vicious one, perpetrated by women who aspired to a higher-ranked job and to more personal attention from their attractive, unmarried boss, organized a widespread campaign designed to outrage all the women in the work environment. In hushed, whispered confidence, pretty, young women were told that "he" boasted he could have any woman he wanted. Older professional women were told horror stories of how "he" overturned the decisions of women administrators right in front of everyone. Black women were told that "he" had a "plantation mentality." All of this went on behind his back, while to his face the organizers simpered and preened starry-eyed and enraptured.

How did he counteract this campaign and survive the months of secretive backstabbing? He conducted business as usual and treated the women as if they were reliable staff members. Whatever private resentments he had he kept to himself, and it certainly must have required a fine degree of self control. But professionalism was his only weapon, and he used it well. Your own professional demeanor will, with time, always help to allay vicious gossip.

Sex in the Marketplace

Diffusing gossip is one reason why, as a woman school administrator, it is important that you never resort to flirting and seduction, even in jest. That is why, as a woman school administrator, you do not tolerate conversations that descend into the lewd and lascivious, but immediately redirect them to a neutral level. That is why, if you are a woman who craves a harem of male admirers, you do not recruit from among your staff. That is why, as a woman school administrator, you stomp with both high heels, with vigor and lethal intent, on any man who presumes to get touchy-feely with your butt or bosom.

But there is a reason beyond your "clean image" that makes sexual overtones, advances, and affairs a very bad idea in the workplace. Sex is a ploy that men use to keep you in your place. Make no mistake about it. Many men, faced with the anomaly of a woman in authority but unwilling to acknowledge her authority, resort to sexual advances as a means of ignoring or subordinating her authority through the age-old male-female domination game.

It is not always easy for attractive women to pass up the opportunity to use their wiles on a power figure who expresses interest.

"Women have few enough advantages. We need to use the ones we have," the courtesan advised the ingenue.[5] But the odds are against it.

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[5] Glenn Close, in "Dangerous "Liaisons."

Most commonly, the affair is short-lived. Most commonly, the unmarried man is merely exercising his feudal privilege. He has done it before, and he will continue to do so. Most commonly, the married man will scurry back to his wife, especially in the corporate world of education where men in power are expected to be clean-living, family men. There are business corporations whose policies ostracize the womanizer and the adulterer, but that varies, whereas the public, when it comes to their moral expectations of men "in charge of" their children, does not.

Either way, the woman who has succumbed becomes an embarrassment, and it is the woman whose career will suffer. Neither author can remember when, in this kind of situation, it was the man rather than the woman who was transferred, fired, or condemned to professional oblivion.[6]

What if you keep the whole thing so quiet that no one ever knows? What if you snuggle on a regular basis with a power figure, whispering suggestions and opinions in his vulnerable ear, learning inside information from his moist, warm, knowledgeable mouth? Whatever private, personal benefits you reap are your business. But do not expect professional benefits. Association with power figures is advantageous only when it is public. A secret affair renders the association invisible. Many a wide-eyed innocent has leapt onto the mattress of power, only to find her body used and her career torpedoed.

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[6] We did know of an instance in which the man was condemned to be eternally passed over because of sexual conduct, but that was because he had married a secretary. In that particular corner of the corporate world of education, it was quite all right to have affairs with secretaries, but to marry one violated the unspoken (male) code.

Sometimes the sexual advance is not at all a grope-and-giggle attempt. It is expressed through attempts on the part of the male to relegate the female into traditionally "subordinate" roles. One of the authors, for example, was warned by a wise (male!) staff member, the first time she embarked on a Southern Accreditation team, not to let anyone know that she could type.

It was grand advice. During the three day visitation, the author typed her reports in the privacy of her room, as advised. As the visitation drew to a close, she observed another woman on the accreditation team at a typewriter in the school office. Sure enough, before the woman had typed a single page, three men on the team had lined up with their handwritten materials in manly fists that "never did learn to type."

If a woman is on a committee, it is very, very common for men to assume, not necessarily as a dominance game but as a knee-jerk reaction, that notes need to be taken and that a woman on the committee will do so. When their heads turn your way, "Just say no!". You have your own ideas, discussion, and recommendations to make to this committee. You are not going to be handcuffed and barred from participation because you are so busy writing down theirs. Of course, you may occasionally have the good fortune, as both authors have had, in these changing times to serve on a committee where one of the men jumps into the breach before the others swivel their heads towards you and announces with a grin, "I'll take the notes."

Food is another female service occupation. In our experience, not too many men today are so ignorant that they would actually ask you, at a meeting, for example, to get the coffee.[7] However, they may think, since you are the woman, that your secretary, not theirs, should provide the service. Or if there is to be a meeting offered by your school/office and there are refreshments involved, that you are the person to arrange for them.

On the other hand, it might be noted, if it is your meeting called by you and chaired by you, it is a nice ploy to serve excellent and even home-baked refreshments. Most men love to eat. In this case, as you meet and greet the arrivals and your secretary fusses around the coffee and nut breads and fruit bowl, you have lost no points and won several. Since you are in charge, there is no question of "subordinate." Men are comfortable with a woman who can cook. You have created a gracious, welcoming atmosphere for meetings which most administrators, male and female, attend with misgivings about lost time. And you have further established that you are quite comfortable with being a woman who can, when it suits *her*, display a touch of domesticity.[8]

Beware of and refuse to acquiesce to any little ploys, intentional or unintentional, at subordination. While typing and food are the two most frequent, different situations generate different little tricks. One of the authors had three women staff members who separately came to declare they would no longer travel with "Mr. JB" from another office.

Why? Did he grope and feel? Not at all! His ploy was constantly to attempt to put the woman in a position of subservience, so that it looked as if she were his employee rather than his colleague. One of the women found herself stuck with carrying his suitcase. Another found herself carrying his materials at the conference, until she left them on an exhibitor's table. All of them found that, when in a group of colleagues, as he introduced himself and learned their names, he tried his best to keep the woman physically, as well as socially, excluded from the circle by blocking her from view and talking at such a pace that she could not break in without being totally rude.

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[7] Naturally, if one should, reward him with a cold stare and an equally cold remark, e.g., "I assume that's a joke?"

[8] If you are hostessing a meeting with a catered lunch to be attended largely by men, take a few minutes to select a toothsome menu. A tuna salad entree is no midday meal for a hungry man.

Sex for Power

Even more frequent than subordination into traditional, service roles which may be at times honestly unconscious, is the conscious attempt to subordinate you professionally through sexual advances. These advances are not necessarily overt. Most frequently they do not go beyond half-promising flirtations. Whenever the man must deal with the woman administrator, he does so with a thick frosting of charm, innuendoes, and unspoken but unmistakable twinkles of lurking passion.[9]

If a woman allows herself to be charmed into a flirtatious mode, the man exits each encounter satisfied that he has the woman under control. She will do his bidding, listen to his ideas, give him priority, allow his office to overpower hers, be gulled into doing his drudgework, or whatever else he expects of subordinate females.

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[9] We are assuming that, as a woman and as we noted earlier, you have already ascertained that a man's self-perceived physical attractiveness has very little to do with his actual external appearance; good-looking men sometimes do not trade on that at all, whereas aging, gouty jocks, apparently blind to the mirror, still see themselves as bedazzling.

You need to dissuade these power-Romeos by your business-like, no-nonsense attitude. You need to dissuade them by watching for their hidden agenda and obliterating it. You need to avoid meetings in private with them whenever possible, because be assured they will falsify what was going on behind closed doors. And even if they don't, their male-bonded buddies will.

Most men will get the message after a few stonewall encounters. Occasionally you will run across a man so accustomed to treating women this way that you cannot convince him that his charm is not working. One of the authors had to abandon a very promising project in cooperation with another office, a project that would have been of as much or more benefit to the other office, simply because the director obviously assumed that the author's real motive was to have an excuse to spend time with him. Oh, well!

If this self-appointed gift to women is in another office, you can simply walk away. If he is on your staff, the problem is more difficult. Again, your best defense, in addition to a brisk attitude, is to avoid individual meetings with him, keep your door open, and keep those meetings which are inevitable, such as his evaluation, as brief as possible.[10] Never have lunch with him alone! If you must have lunch with him, for example at a meeting, a conference, or a visit to another school/district, include other people in the party. Try to include at least one other man who wants you to think well of him. There is safety in numbers. Or sit your problem next to some other woman and let him charm her! That will keep him busy.

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[10] Korda described one female executive who never saw any man without her two secretaries in the room. However, there are some privacy policies (and laws) regarding evaluations which might prohibit this tactic of "ever-present witness(es)."

If the charmer is your boss, your problem may not be as difficult, as long as the work he expects is reasonable. After all, he is *in* the position of power, not attempting to capture it. As long as his advances do not become physical and explicit, you probably don't need to raise the cry of sexual harassment. However, if his advances escalate, if sex is an unwritten clause in your new job description, then you have a serious problem and you probably need to take serious action. Whether it is quitting, finding another job, filing a formal complaint, or going to his superior will depend on you and your particular situation.

One cheery note: in these changing times, the administrators "up there" do not want these sexual harassment accusations, so they will listen. One warning note: if you do carry your complaint upward or outward, be sure you have real grounds! Leering and lip-licking do not constitute much of a case. You don't have to let things go too far to have a case, but don't destroy your own credibility with the powers that be and with other colleagues, male and female, by seeing sex behind every smirk.

Making Use of Sex

Happily, in the world of school administration, you are less likely to run into sexual problems with your boss. Unlike the corporate world of business, male school administrators are expected by their community to present a clean, family-man image. Male school administrators who slip into lurid situations get fired, or transferred, or blackballed. Yes, as we mentioned earlier, even in the 1990's and even as we write this is happening around us.

This expectation of the male school administrator can work very much to your advantage. As you wend your way through the world of school administration, it will be easier for you, as a woman, to network with male power figures. In the first place, as a woman, like it or not, you are not as much of a threat to them. In the second place, as a professional, you can understand their problems, their work, their accomplishments. Related to this second place is the fundamental fact that the male is compelled to preen for the female. A school administrator who can preen by recounting his exploits to an understanding female is a happy man. He will have happy memories of you, the woman who provided him these happy preening sessions. He will remember you as an able professional, because you grasped the importance of what he had accomplished.

Unavailable to men is the weapon of your femininity. You can admire from afar, which flatters the male ego, but you will also admire with respect, which ensures safety for his family image. Of course, this is easier for the middle-aged woman, and a little more difficult if you are quite a dish yourself, since your admiration is more likely to give any man some non-professional ideas.

But it can be done. Even if you are a woman who incites lust in the most passive family man, you can use this same ploy. Just use it in groups. There is always safety in numbers. There is even enhancement in numbers, for you can get the man talking about his successes in a situation where other, too, can hear and be amazed, particularly if you subtly supply appropriate little prompts.

Also, as a woman, you can offer your closer co-workers, whose sincerity you have found trustworthy and whose motives are above suspicion, a woman's point of view when they themselves have distressing personal problems. You can be a confidante about their marriage, daughter, girlfriend, or unwelcome female pursuer with an insight and perspective that his male colleagues do not have.

Naturally, these female tricks must be done with sincerity. This cannot be a phony interest, for most school administrators are not fools, and you certainly won't fool them for long. You need to be truly interested in the colleague's achievements or problems. Happily, you probably will have a genuine interest. You will be learning more about the world of school administration, you will be garnering information, you will be expanding your network. These are all to your self-interest.

And happily, because you are an educator, you truly will applaud the man's triumphs and sympathize with his troubles. Appreciating and empathizing are two things we women do very well.

Your Significant Other

If you are not prepared for it, your new position will engender an annoying invasion of your private life that can, if you allow it, destroy that private life. The greatest impact probably falls on the school-based administrator. Every familiar haunt, be it the produce aisle of the supermarket or the bleachers at Little League or the teller's window at the bank, become a place to run into parents who want to discuss their student or someone else's. In large cities, you may have the option of living on the far side of town. In small towns or rural areas, the public encounters are inescapable. There is the option of living in another town, but many small town districts insist that you reside in that same town.

Your phone can become a favorite weapon of the invaders. You will get calls from the thoughtless, who like so many students, see teachers and other school-related personnel as on the job twenty-four hours a day. You will get calls from those whose own priorities seem to them to outweigh your need of sleep, such as a husband who rings up at one in the morning to announce that his wife is too ill to come to work tomorrow. If you are assigned the task of securing substitutes, one of the authors, who has had this assignment, urgently recommends that in the interest of your health, you use voice mail, directed to your secretary.

Beyond the thoughtless, you will get those who would have a "special in," demonstrable by their having direct access to you at home rather than their having to queue up like the rank and file. You will have those who seek to persuade you to their point of view by calling up, for example, threatening to resign at ten in the evening. You will have those who have no private life of their own and want to while away the hours getting the "inside view" from someone like you.

You need to attend to your phone problem for the sake of your mental and emotional health. You can develop a brisk, no-nonsense phone manner which in a matter of sixty seconds deals with or redirects the caller and *hangs up*. In this day of modern electronics, there are also other options if you don't choose to be answering calls, or if you find it difficult to cut people off at the larynx. You can unplug the monster and spend the evening in peace. You can have a "Caller ID" box, and let the answering machine speak for you to unknown numbers. Or you can leave the answering machine on automatic and pick up only when the message-leaver is someone whose call you welcome. Or, you can have a second line for business purposes, so that avoiding the caller does not take up your time nor cut you off from family and friends.

The Time Crunch

You will have less time for your family and friends. This is a fact. As a school administrator with functions to attend and supervise, or as a district (or state) administrator with all day and evening meetings and weekend conferences to attend, you will come face to face with the immutable fact that there are only twenty-four hours in the day. If you spend more of them on the job, you must perforce spend fewer of them at home.

Consequently, the time you do spend with family and friends must make up by quality that which inevitably you will lose in quantity. It won't just happen. To succeed in this adjustment, you must have a plan. If you assume it will somehow all work out, you will find yourself drifting down the current into that sad sea where all the other workaholics drift into an empty horizon. This probably happens often enough in the corporate world of business, but in the corporate world of education, where our work is never finished, it will surely happen, and it will happen to you.

Women have a greater problem than men in this regard. One option for men, of course, is to include the wife (and children, or significant other) in their work responsibilities. Not only can wives, and, in this day and age, significant others, attend state and national conferences with their husbands or partners, but many organizations have special events, tours, or activities designed for the non-educator wives while husbands attend professional sessions.

On a daily basis, the wife can also participate. If there is to be an Open House at the elementary school, a principal's wife can be in charge of refreshments, or registration, or entertainment. If there is a concession stand, the basketball coach's fiancée can join in the mothers from the Booster Club. If the assistant principal must attend the all-state band competition, the family can go along and make a picnic of it. At all those evening events that principals, especially at the middle and high school level, must attend, a wife can come along, and the children can come along.

Not only does this seem natural and appropriate, but sometimes this inclusion of wife and family can be a real benefit to the male school administrator. One high school principal of our acquaintance rarely appears at any function without his wife. At an Honors Award banquet where he arrived alone, his opening remarks to the assemblage began, "My wife truly regrets she couldn't be here tonight..." Not only was he enhancing his image as a family man, but because this particular principal was, by any standard, a charismatic and an extraordinarily handsome man, his wife also served as an invulnerable shield against female assault. Not many of us, as women, will fault a man or harbor ill will towards him because he is a husband in love with and faithful to his wife.[11]

If a wife loves her husband, it is not difficult for her when needed to play Mrs. Principal. However, no matter how much a husband loves his wife, this role of complacent, supportive second fiddle is rarely relished by a man. Most men can make the occasional appearance, and it may even be an interesting change of pace for them. One "second fiddle" from the world of entertainment who went along to a formal event commented later that it was "relaxing and really great" to mingle for a while in a crowd where it was what you knew, not just how you looked, that mattered.

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[11] In contrast, another tall, handsome principal, whose wife refused to attend anything with him, appeared (wrongly) to be delightfully available and was forever dancing an evasion game with female teachers in pursuit.

Some men, although certainly not all, can even manage the small talk that goes along with these functions. Perhaps some other man will be attending, be it an administrator or a spouse, with whom your man will enjoy chatting. Perhaps your man likes soccer well enough to go to the school games or enjoys a good meal well enough to attend the French Honor Society Inauguration at *Chez Marcel*. Your man probably will accept with good grace an occasional outing into your world, and being out there with you will soothe nagging little suspicions that you have a whole "separate life" which does not even acknowledge his existence.

However, most men will not play Mrs. Administrator very often. Some will not play at all, in part because, as one superintendent's husband used to grumble, when educators get together, all they talk about is education. Nor will it enrich your relationship for you to insist, but you already know that.[1] If you have a Significant Other who is unusually jealous, you have a serious problem, since you will be working in a world populated and dominated by men, educated, intelligent, and often attractive men. You can drag him along on a regular basis or you can seek counseling, but if you value the relationship, you must deal openly with the problem.

The problems are not insoluble in most cases, unless you ignore them. You do need to realize that your role as an administrator can cause significant damage or even to the dissolution of your relationship unless you take it under advisement and develop a plan to prevent the potential for damage. After all, you were intelligent enough to develop and execute your plan to become an administrator. Surely you can do the same to preserve your private life.

Mens sana in corpore sano

The Greeks said it first, long before there were school administrators, but the advice certainly applies. Perhaps we are biased, since everyone considers his/her own job stressful, but we believe that school administration is near the top of the stress thermometer.[12]

Not only do you have the normal administrative stress of people, procedures, and budget management, but you have the community, the parents, and the students. One of the express highways to burn-out is to be dealing with problems for which you cannot achieve solutions, such as the nurse of the terminally ill patient. As a school administrator, you must sometimes deal with failures over which you have no control: minimally competent teachers whom you cannot fire, school districts iron-clad by status quo, students whose home environments defy any intervention solutions or whose addictions or off-campus activities lead them into prison or over the edge of the drop-out cliff.

In order to cope with this giant serving of stress, it will be important for you to include in your personal plan a component to keep yourself physically fit. The goal is fitness, not fashionable beauty. Naturally, if yours is the gift of beauty, don't be shy. However, if you are not a movie-star look-alike, the corporate world of education will still accept you without qualms or snap judgments about your abilities. One of the authors once watched a woman, totally "unblessed" in face and form by any standard of physical beauty, hold an audience of five hundred men spellbound; she had what educators value: intelligence, experience, knowledge, sensitivity, and a grand sense of humor.

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[12] One stress study puts health care, law enforcement, and education as the three most stressful fields, with nurses in intensive care cancer wards being at the top of the quick burn-out list.

We are all aware of the study that tells us that, given equal talent, the Beautiful Person is perceived as more competent, intelligent and able than the Plain Person. Fortunately for many of us, in education beauty and high fashion garb, so closely analyzed and categorized in the corporate world of business, are not requirements for success in the corporate world of education. Some districts and agencies may have high expectations of professional appearance and dress. On the other hand, at an elegant black tie dinner in Washington, D.C. attended by high level educators from every state, many a casual outfit strolled through cocktails and a seven-course dinner.

But fitness does matter. Beyond the standard benefits of a pleasing appearance, there are practical reasons why you should pay some attention to your physical well-being, reasons such as avoiding ulcers and heart trouble. If you were a classroom teacher before you decided to climb a flagpole, you were probably fairly active and constantly on your feet during the school day, while your new position probably has you sitting at a desk, at least for part of the day. Good, healthful, heart-pumping exercise needs to be a part of your plan, whether you prefer an aerobics class, a session with your garden weeds, a few laps in the pool, or an afternoon trip on your hand-glider.

Physical exercise is also one of the several strategies to combat burn-out. You need to include some anti-burnout time in your life if you intend to continue very long as a school administrator. For those who are not familiar with them, other anti-burnout strategies include doing something nice for others to give yourself a warm, fuzzy feeling and take your mind off your own problems. Another strategy is doing something nice for yourself, such as a good steak dinner, or having a pedicure, or going on a mini-vacation. Also recommended is spending time alone in surroundings of serene solitude to reflect and unravel the knots in your mind.

Another good mental outlet to combat burnout, give you a change of pace, and redefine "you," as opposed to "you the administrator" is spending time on a favorite hobby. For a total change of pace and to add a new dimension to the basic "you," experts suggest taking up a completely new interest like tobogganing or arrowheads or flying lessons. Any of these strategies help you regain your perspective and shrink problems back into their proper proportion. Remember, problems loom larger on a tiny horizon.

Keep your own horizons broad. For the sake of your physical health and for your mental health, which in turn effect your professional as well as your personal life, as you embark on your career as a school administrator, don't postpone time-out for exercise and mental outlets nor skip every time you get "too busy."

On this flagpole you have chosen to climb, "too busy" is the status quo. For your health, for your family, for your happiness, for success, and especially for the partner at home surmount the status quo with a plan.

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CHAPTER 7

Establishing Pole Position

Breathing Space

Your first week probably passed quickly. You have used it wisely to make a positive, professional, even-handed first impression. You have dealt well with the people crowding into your office door and taken at least an initial measure of the men with whom you will be working. You have begun to sketch out a plan to keep your personal life and well-being on track. You have gotten a general understanding of priorities and dates, at least for now. You have your "must do" calendar in order, your office in order, and your secretary in order, if you have one.

However, you may not have accomplished everything on your "must do" calendar. Even so, we would strongly recommend a breathing space, a weekend in which you let everything rest prior to a week of "regular" schedule which will be followed by many, many weeks of regular schedule, insofar as school administrators ever have a "regular" schedule. There should be a demarcation between "introductory week" and "regular, ongoing weeks," especially if you are in a new environment.

The clearest advantage of this is that it signals to everyone that a new regime has begun. No one would expect, accept, nor support changes the first week you are on the job. But no one should be lulled into thinking that you have come to maintain the status quo on all fronts, unless, of course, you have become principal of The Perfect School.

Fleshing Out Your Image

In your first few days, you established the outline of your image as a competent, caring professional. Now you will need to fill it in with deeds and actions consistent with that image. You have already begun to develop a positive relationship with your immediate superior, who presumably had a hand in hiring you in the first place. As early as your job interview, you began to understand his (her?) priorities, and during the first days you have made a point to consult him (her?) about those priorities. The two of you should be off to a reasonably good start.

Networking

You may have also made contacts during your first week at the next level "up," such as at the district office, as you chased down information about due dates and procedures. These contacts will be the start of an important aspect of your long-term "image development."

Networking with your counterparts and with appropriate district personnel, or appropriate "other district" personnel, provides you several advantages. Obviously, it provides you with resources for information and suggestions about programs and procedures (but not people!). These resources are particularly important if you are in a system new to you, but even if you are in the same old system, you are dealing with new aspects of it.

Equally important, networking extends your image beyond the walls of your office. By extending your image, by becoming known (and liked!) within a broader network, you cannot help but add greater substance to your image within your immediate working environment. Just as you began networking wherever you could when you first considered entering administration, you now have an opportunity, during your daily routine as well as at appropriate regional, state, and perhaps even national conferences, to continue the development of your network.

If you had no opportunity or reason in your first few days to start making these network contacts, you can take the initiative. You can make appropriate calls to appropriate contacts asking whether they normally provide a specific service to your office. For example, does the Director of Federal Programs provide assistance to a teacher who wishes to write a grant? Even if you have no teacher planning a grant, the question is valid, the person is appropriate, and whatever the answer -- yes, no or maybe -- you have made a contact.

You might even make appropriate calls asking how your position/office might be of support to them. This requires some judgment on your part as to what proffered support from you would be suitable. For example, you don't offer your teachers' help to man registration during the summer or to help the district media center to weed their collection of books. You certainly don't want to set yourself up as the new dumping ground for drudgery. On the other hand, you might want to offer to be considered to pilot some new (and apparently worthwhile) program, or pass along new grant information to your faculty.

Connoisseurship

Connoisseurship in education, in case you have not run across the term, refers to a subjective evaluation made by a professional on the basis of observed but never pre-judged facts. You come, you see, and then you assess, analyze, and adjust. Now that you have arrived, your next few weeks should consist in seeing. If you are in charge of an instructional program, you need to see what is going on. Just because you have been in the school for eighteen years has no bearing on your grasp of what each department is doing, or each grade level. You need to get into the classrooms. You simply have to make the time.

If teachers are responsible to you, you must remember your own teaching days. Where did "school" happen? In the front office? At the faculty meeting? During a hasty lunch? No, "school" for you happened in your classroom. As an administrator, your appearance or non-appearance in that classroom says it all, as far as the teacher is concerned. If you never come to the classroom, you place no real value on what happens in that classroom. The conclusion is just that simple for teachers who pour their energy and expertise out into that classroom day after day.

The same is true if you are now a district administrator. The greatest error you can make, as the director or assistant superintendent for instruction, is to be invisible. The best of breed have not only been in the schools, but know many teachers by name.[1] Even the superintendent cannot afford to meet with only her principals until sometime in April. The teachers need to see her and hear her the first day back to school, if she wants their professional acceptance and support.

Your district is too big? Then call a worthwhile meeting. Bring at least the assistant principals of instruction to you. Or have several meetings for different subject areas (don't forget the fine arts K-12 and other "frills"). Make sure the meetings are informative and fun. Make sure you serve quality cookies and zesty punch. Make sure the meetings are not held on the participants' own time, even if this uses up your staff development substitute teacher budget for the year. It is an investment you cannot afford to sidestep. You need to let these people see you, and let them see you while they are having a good time. Learn from Pavlov. Good time = you.

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[1] One outstanding assistant superintendent for instruction in Horry County, SC (Myrtle Beach area), now a professor at Wofford College, was Dr. James Mahaffey. One 8th grade PE teacher told one of the authors, with awe in her voice, "Dr. Mahaffey knows everyone. He even knew my mother was in the hospital, and he asked me how she was."

The same principle holds true for whatever position you occupy. If you are director of federal programs for your district, get out and see those programs in action. If you are School Bus Director, get out to the shops and to driver training classes. If you are Reading Consultant, get out and see the reading programs. If you are director of staff development, do not assume "what teachers need." Get out and see for yourself.

Above all do not succumb to some ivory tower notion and write some position paper or Pollyanna pamphlet to be distributed to the teachers. Teachers are not going to take precious time to read something penned by the Invisible Girl. Unlike the corporate executive, as we mentioned earlier, you are not dealing with people who spend their lives in a cultural hothouse, protected from grim realities, or who work together in large office complexes. You are dealing with teachers who stand alone in their classrooms, facing two or three dozen grim realities.

They already suspect that you administrators, and most especially you district people, spend your time drinking coffee, eating doughnuts, and giving some poor secretary all the real work. You deserve a better image! But you must create it for yourself. While you are out seeing, be seen!

This is also politically wise. If you, over time, steadily and without untoward eagerness, strengthen your image and your rapport with the faculty, or with the school personnel appropriate to your area of authority, this strength serves as a worthy bastion against in-house politics and pettiness. But if you are invisible, if people "out there," be it out there in the corridors of your school, or out there in the district or the state, don't know who you are, it is much easier for the English consultant or the burned out Voc Ed teacher who covets your job to assail your good name, question your worth, and sabotage your efforts.

Working the Crowd

How you present yourself "out there" depends on whether your "clientele" consists mostly of teachers or mostly of administrators. In either case, you need never succumb to parchment-skinned paranoia, constantly cataloguing how people "out there" are treating you. Forget that you are a woman. Remember only that you are an administrator. Focus not on how they treat you, but on how *you* treat *them*. It makes all the difference.

If you deal mostly with teachers, as a woman you already have a valuable edge. As a woman you are more believable as a former teacher. A man, rightly or wrongly, is generally suspected of having been a coach first and a teacher very much last. You will want to capitalize on this advantage.

The old style authority-figure, who is in charge because he has the title, still exists in some circles and in the minds of men. But in the minds of vast numbers of workers, whatever their place of employment, glows a strong preference for the super peer, the individual who is in authority because she (or maybe he) is very, very good at the particular work, and that is why she is in

charge of the work. Thus you will endeavor to project an image not only of a teacher, but of a superteacher. Nothing will enhance your credibility faster. Nothing will build for you a more solid basis to initiate improvement and change, if change there must be.

You will want to look like a teacher. Teachers do not wander the halls in high heels and a designer suit. You need to dress as a role model, of course, in "affordable" attire and never in pants unless you are the "Ag Ed" person. On university campuses one finds those women who cultivate the frumpy look and eschew all hint of glamour under the delusion that it makes them appear more "intellectual." We do not recommend this image. If a woman is truly intelligent, surely she can master the basics of fashion.

A good teacher, furthermore, is a warm, caring person. We all know that cold fish do not make good teachers. You smile, you nod, you enjoy listening to other people talk about their triumphs and concerns. You resist the temptation to smother them with your own repertoire of old war stories. Save your war stories for speeches, and even then, be thrifty with them and be sure they have a non-Pollyanna-ish point to make!

And do nod to whatever students who see fit to acknowledge your existence. Teacher eyes are watching your reaction. Do it well!

You will of course, being a sensitive and perceptive woman, have the good sense to approach all these folks "out there," whoever they may be, as colleagues, comrades in arms, fellow educators. You will not make the mistake of descending into a school or classroom from on high to chat with the "little people." You will of course, being a sensitive and perceptive woman, acknowledge and listen to their ideas, praise that which is praiseworthy wherever it is found, and

praise those who are worthy of praise in front of others, so that the praise sings forth with more glorious voice.

What if there's nothing good? There will be. There is no district without a good school, and no school without at least one good teacher.[2]

In brief, find the strengths before you criticize the weaknesses, and take the opportunity to be visible. Once this task is done, then you will be ready to assess where your program is. Once you have seen what is "out there," you are ready to assess what improvements are needed and devise your plans to achieve those improvements.

Assessing for success

What do teachers want to improve? How about a nice questionnaire? Or have you forgotten the gratuitous remarks, sneers, and crumpled balls of paper that hailed those questionnaires in the mailboxes back when you were a teacher? During your tour of connoisseurship, how was the faculty morale? In the mood to improve anything? Or is morale going to be one of your improvement priorities?

Do teachers even want to be consulted? There has been much literature generated on school-based management, and there has been considerable subsequent research indicating that teachers don't want to take *their* time to do *your* job.[3] The great majority of teachers want to teach.

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[2] While this may sound hopelessly Pollyanna-ish, the consultants in the Curriculum Section in South Carolina (State Department of Education) often commented on this very fact: never did they go to a district, and they went to them all, where they did not find at least some good teachers and some good things happening.

[3] This is even more true at a district or state level. One blossoming young state administrator called in all the directors of federal programs in order to present and read them a Memo. The

Possibly one of the worst things you can do is form a committee to draw up recommendations, with ample "input" from the whole faculty, have the committee write it all up in a report, "share" this report with everyone, and then let the whole thing die in a file drawer. This will not flesh out your image. This will shrivel it, perhaps permanently.

Do not ask for teacher input if you do not plan to use it. Do not ask for teacher input if you have already determined needs.[4] Do not ask for teacher input unless the issue concerns teachers' everyday, ongoing duties. Do not ask for teacher input to rubber-stamp some plan that implies that teachers are incompetent.

In your tour of connoisseurship, you may very well have identified as a raging crisis problems that are best not "shared." For example, you, as principal or assistant principal for instruction, find that your guidance department is locked in ruthless, internecine warfare. In your meeting with them, like so many over-eager actors, they "step" on each other's lines, laying blame and flinging reproaches. Surely you don't think their "input" for a solution is going to count for much.

The responsibility to resolve this snarl is yours. If the department head of guidance is as quick with an insult as her colleagues, you need to sit her down privately and discuss "positive leadership." You may need to remove her from the position. It may be very unpleasant. But that comes with the territory. If she

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ensuing outrage nearly knocked the perpetrator off the flagpole forever.

[4] Some research indicates that teachers when asked, for example, what kind of staff development they want, tend to request that in which they already have some strength. Is more of the same where you want them to go?

has been playing tyrant for some time, be assured everyone else has known it for some time. They'll be curious as to what you do about it! Will you handle it and settle the matter, or stick your head in your paperwork and pretend to ignore it? We are sure you can deduce for yourself which posture will provide better flesh for your image.

If you find the mathematics teachers deadlocked over the selection of a textbook, you are the administrator, and you need to find a solution. If their "input" could do it, they wouldn't be deadlocked in the first place. Your solution does not mean choosing the textbook yourself. You may call in an outside expert to conduct a "textbook analysis session" with all the mathematics teachers. You may let the publishers' representatives (the large houses all have specialists for the purpose) present their books. Then you can call a vote, and even if the vote is close, all the teachers had a say and the issue is decided.

Of course there are some issues which, if properly narrowed down to a few choices, are perfectly proper for faculty "input." For example, if you have determined that instructional methods need improvement, you may poll the faculty as to their preference for staff development in thinking skills, peer grouping, or simulations. If you have determined that parent communications are a priority, you can hold a brainstorming session to generate "best ways to go about it."

Then again, even simple choices may not be worth presenting if your teachers are negative and suspicious of change. You may be wiser to take your new idea to your strongest, most positive group of teachers, perhaps a particular grade level, or a particular subject area, or a particular school. These are the teachers who will be most likely to agree to something new, and they will be the most likely to make a success of it. Once you have one small success, you can build on that. You have shown that your ideas are groomed for success. Everyone wants in on success.

However you choose to initiate an improvement, be sure first of all that you yourself have prioritized carefully what you would like to see happen. One success is worth a thousand abandoned projects. Education today abounds with short-term cure-all programs. Once the initial project is over, be sure to bring it to some kind of formal closure so that everyone knows of its accomplishments. Then be sure it is mentioned in some other public context at a later date. Let those teachers who carried your banner know, in the presence of others, that their achievements have brought about a permanent difference, however small the arena. Let your first improvement be a lasting one, so that your career may be fruitful and the fleshing out of your image succulent and sweet to behold.

Working the Administrative Crowd

If your "clientele" consists largely of administrators, as a new administrator, you have no super-peer image, since you are untried as an administrator. You probably will be much slower in undertaking any major administrative change, since experience has yet to refine your connoisseurship in the area of administrative systems. Additionally, as a woman you have a built-in disadvantage. Here you are, trying to do a man's job. Trying to act like a man will not convince anyone. Aggressive behavior will antagonize people. Imperious behavior will result in a general slamming of mental doors to keep you out.

People management has one simple, cardinal rule: *people will do more for you if they like you.* The bludgeons of fear and intimidation and deceit work for a while and are popular in other corporate worlds, but simple likeability works all the time and is much more in harmony with the values in our corporate world of education.

Therefore, you want to be likable, but not malleable. There is a difference. As a woman, you probably smile too much. You probably nod too much. You probably agree too quickly. We women in large part have been raised to please. As an administrator, don't be so quick to please. Withhold judgment. Be assertive, but not of your position nor of your title; flaunting titles and dropping names are weapons of the weak. However, do be pleasantly assertive of your opinions, of your views, of your right to listen and disagree.

If your duties take you into groups of counterparts and peers, listen, locate the informal power centers, nod sparingly, agree judiciously, keep your hands from fidgeting and your posture relaxed, smile but only at comments that you find professionally pleasing. When you do voice an opinion, be decisive. As a woman, you cannot afford to strengthen the stereotype by fence-sitting and weathervaning. On the other hand, you will want to avoid the macho strategy of shooting from the hip. Education is not a game of easy answers. You know that, and so does any competent educator.

Luckily, if you have been a middle school or high school teacher, you have developed a well-tuned "voice of authority." If you have been a elementary school teacher, do be aware that your colleagues are in a different age bracket. The authors have both known women who could have gone much further had they just kept this difference of audience in mind.

If your position brings you into frequent contact with power figures, such as top district administrators, you will, as a woman, make sure that you are professional but not intimidated, that you are charming but not toadyish. You will not seek out the power center and smile and grin like a court jester. You will not ignore those whom you perceive as peripheral, although you do not need to join with them as if acknowledging you are all at the bottom rung.

In fact, you will want to be careful that those who are condemned to oblivion do not to corral you in there with them or set themselves up to ride your hemline into the sunglow. Be careful, for example, not to be plunged into some kind of "women's network" which too late you will discover to be made up of ambitious unemployables. It happens. Human beings often need a kinder reason to explain to themselves their failed ambitions.

But whoever they are, you do want to treat them all with an even-handed, friendly courtesy, regardless of your personal opinion of them.[5] It is not only the "caring, sensitive" thing to do. It is the politically smart thing to do. Some people who may seem to be out of the mainstream may or may not be peripheral, and they may or may not stay that way, as power centers and game outcomes move along the ever-changing currents of the power flow. Keep all your bases covered with some social grace.

You will also have the good sense not to play games with more seasoned administrators.. There is a time for games, but it is not now. You're not that good yet! You will impress no one, at least not in the way you had hoped. You are not dealing with students, or neophytes, or fools. All you will achieve at this point with your games is a sneer of contempt disguised with a smile.

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[5] Naturally, someone who deliberately attacks or belittles you constitutes an exception to be handled not with anger, but with cold disdain. However, such a creature is rare.

The Fourth Dimension

In any corporate administrative position, there are always the three dimensions to consider: above, across, and below. But in school administration, there is always the fourth dimension: the community. Only a limited number of corporate executives deal with the clientele. Only a limited number of school personnel can escape dealing with the clientele.

Once your first week is over, you must turn some attention to the community image that your school has, or to the community rapport or involvement or impact that your area of responsibility commands. Your first point of contact is, of course, your telephone. You probably don't answer it yourself unless a call is directed to you. Who does answer it? How do they answer it? You need to listen to how that first community contact is being made.

Some schools like to help out students who are otherwise somewhat unfocused by letting them work in the office. Whether you accept that premise or not, it is, in our opinion, extremely unwise to let them answer the phone. Most community contacts begin with, and may even be limited to, phone contact. Those callers should hear a pleasant voice that can put them through to someone who can help them. There is nothing more aggravating to a caller than to be shunted about from office to office on a whining wave of, "We don't handle that." If your phone is not creating the kind of image that it should, change it or train it.

Whether you are in a school or a district office, we suggest there be a degree of "truth in advertising." At the state level, it seems even more important. Since taxpayers are by nature suspicious of how their tax dollars are being spent, we suggest it is important that people whose salaries are paid from tax dollars not be reported as "busy" or "not available" or "out." The average taxpayer interprets this as "away from the office on personal business," "chatting with cronies," or "could care less about taxpayer concerns."

We would suggest more truthfully specific answers. "She is in a parent conference right now." "She is at the State Principal's Conference until Monday." "She's in a meeting with the science teachers right now." "I'm sorry, she's out on the field coaching for the rest of the afternoon." "She is in class..... No, I'm sorry, we are not allowed to interrupt class time." "She is at lunch right now, but will be back at one. Would you like to have her call?"

These answers suggest not some lazy, dawdling, uncaring tax money parasite but a busy professional fulfilling her duties. Or his. These answers allow the caller to glimpse the legitimacy of unavailability without invading anyone's privacy. Naturally, such explanations as "She went home sick," or "Her child is sick" or "She's left for home" are not appropriate. "I'm sorry, she had to leave for the day." Where and why is no one's business. If she left, it was because it was appropriate for her to leave. If the caller wants the home phone, absolutely not!

Those callers who are rude, and schools seem to be getting more and more of those, should hear a firm voice that gets neither angry nor nervous, but is at the same time not about to be intimidated into putting Mr. and Mrs. Rudeness through immediately to the principal if the principal is in conference. This firm voice should not be intimidated into giving out any information about a teacher. For all you know, the voice on the other end of the phone claiming to be a parent may be an attorney involved in a teacher's divorce case.

There is a balance, every day more delicate, between making a good impression on the community and protecting school personnel against a horde of self-seeking, self-styled "experts" who want to demean, descry, and disparage teachers in order to justify their child's failure to behave or perform according to the parents' expectations.

"What are your qualifications for saying this teacher knows nothing about teaching?"

"I'm a concerned parent," replied one father with a smug smile. My, my, aren't we all!

This is not the place to settle the issue of "teacher-bashing" that seems to enjoy such increasing popularity among parents.[6] Our point here is that whoever answers your phone, at the school level or at the district level, needs to be well prepared to respond both to legitimate calls seeking information and appointments as well as rude calls making inappropriate demands. This person is a crucial factor in the community-wide image of your school or office.

If your new position involves school district responsibilities, you probably have nothing to do with the upkeep and appearance of a building. However, if you are a new principal, or assistant principal whose responsibilities include maintenance, you need to take a look at your school in terms of what it must look like to the community. Of course you keep it clean! All day, every day, no excuses.

But is it also "pretty" and "inviting?" Naturally you will not be handed a large budget for landscaping and the construction of marble fountains. But could there be a few plantings? A brick walk? Do you have a vocational education class in your school or district that would take on some improvement as a hands-on project? If you have no expertise in this area, invite over someone who does. Perhaps there is in your district an "Ag Ed" person who would discuss plantings with you, or a science teacher who is an environmental missionary dedicated to plant life and natural beauty.

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[6] One state has reported that the principal reason for teachers' leaving the profession is "unpleasant encounters with parents."

Are your walls plain and dumpy? Could an art teacher help you plan improvements for only the cost of some paint? Are your trophy cases dusty? Is there nothing in there more recent than 1982? Perhaps a different display might give your community visitors a better impression. Can the visitor easily find the office? The main office? Is it clearly posted that visitors *must* find the main office before wandering into the classroom halls? One elementary school cleverly enlivened its bare walls and routed visitors by painting huge, bright graphic directional arrows and signs.

When the visitor does arrive at the office, does it bustle pleasantly? Is there someone designated to quickly greet and direct visitors, or is that someone tied up with a personal phone call or surrounded laughingly by several students who apparently have no need to be in class? Is the only mail visible today's mail, or has someone left her cartons unmoved since they arrived four weeks ago?

Are there comfortable but businesslike chairs where visitors can wait? Are there suitable and recent magazines to read, or only crumpled ones suspiciously suitable for harboring silverfish? Are there plants, and are they alive?

Is the office kiddy-proofed, so that parents who must bring along small siblings don't threaten disaster? Some offices have quiet-time toys such as wooden puzzles for the very young to keep them busy while the parent attends to the older sibling. This is a good idea if someone can keep them in good order; broken puzzles, however, don't suggest educational know-how.

As with your office, your school should also announce that there is a new hand at the helm. But not an extravagant hand! Nothing will set the community teeth on edge as quickly as lavish carpets and designer lamps, mauve chalkboards or vast stretches of wasted space. On the other hand, do not summarily reject an expenditure just because it might meet with initial criticism if you truly believe it will justify itself, and you. One superintendent completely refurbished the rickety high school gymnasium hoping to create some school pride. At first many a sneer went his way ("just another jock") until the community attended some games and realized how much nicer it was for both students and community to host other teams in a decent gym. On the other hand, a superintendent who purchased the $15,000 desk for himself never did explain that one away.

Your relationship with the community does not need to be limited to reactive. More and more the modern school administrator establishes pro-active relationships with the community. Adopt a school! Fund a scholarship! Partners in education! Apples for Kids! Career shadowing! Motivators!

As a woman, you will not enjoy the same open-armed acceptance as a man in every influential community group. How wide the door opens for you or whether it opens at all for you to gain the ear of the Rotary Club, BPOE, Civitan, the Lion's Club, the Chamber of Commerce, or even the League of Women Voters or the American Association of Businesswomen will depend on the political bent of your particular community. But it is to your advantage to select judiciously among these and slowly but surely begin to weave your own personal network here.

The Fifth Dimension

As if dealing with your clientele were not enough of an added complication to school administration, many school administrators, at both the school and district (and for that matter, the state) level have yet another group which intermittently appears on the horizon: the university crowd. Do be cautious! When a university professor approaches the public school, it is all too often to ask a favor.

Certainly there are those who come offering to do you a favor, at their own expense. For example, the President and Academic Dean of Wofford College arrived at the State Department of Education asking, "What can we do to help?" and when the discussion was over, they put hand to task and developed an outstanding thinking skills summer institute for math teachers.

Clemson University and Winthrop College funded professors to travel to Columbia to serve as judges at a statewide (high school) Foreign Language Day. Several colleges, but the Clemson University administration in particular, whole-heartedly supported state efforts to establish required AP training courses for high school teachers, and they provided tailored courses of such merit that, believe it or not, the teachers loved those two required (and state-funded) weeks on the campus. The University of South Carolina Health Education Department proposed and executed a project in one of the less advantaged districts that, despite the superintendent's (and one of the author's) initial skepticism, had outstanding results. Not only were the immediate results noteworthy, but the project continues to produce good results a decade later.

Such university-linked ventures can be a wonderful resource and should be cultivated. University faculties have the resources to provide enrichment and depth to a wide variety of exciting, innovative projects.

Unhappily, just as common are those professors who arrive at your office with their own self-serving agenda in mind.[7] Sometimes the purpose is merely irritating: handing out to your teachers a five-page survey to fill out as "data" for some paper that they or some of their graduate students are writing. Sometimes the purpose is to provide, for a handsome fee, a workshop for your teachers, whom they routinely judge to be lacking all semblance of competence.[8]

Sometimes the purpose is to lure your teachers to a summer course which they wish to offer. This could be a grand idea, if the course is streamlined to expressed needs of teachers. Some universities send out local questionnaires asking what might be useful to teachers in the region. On the other hand, if the proposed course is a mishmash of professors each "doing their thing" for a few days, because they are, after all, professors, save your money!

Sometimes the professorial purpose is to garner for themselves a position as consultant for your federal program. One professor had gotten himself in one year named as consultant, at a healthy stipend, on twenty-one different district federal Title I projects. Apparently his dean never expected him to be on campus!

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[7] And, we might add, a very unfortunate contempt for "school teachers" -- this includes you.

[8] Their condemnation includes those teachers they themselves have trained. We have found this to be a curious puzzlement.

Sometimes, especially in the wake of new legislative requirements, the purpose is to sell you the cure-all program. When Secretary of Education Richard Riley[9] was Governor of South Carolina, several major education improvement bills were passed. In their wake this phenomenon was rampant, especially regarding Basic Skills and Gifted and Talented requirements as well as Thinking Skills enthusiasms. Experts truly mushroomed overnight where before none had been known to grow, and some of them had very costly programs to sell.

If you are currently enrolled in a program on a university campus, attempting to upgrade your own certification, be doubly careful and superbly diplomatic! If the proposal seems to have merit, and certainly some of them do, make no commitment until you have an opportunity to check it out with other districts who have purchased the service. Did the professor fulfill the contract, or did he send graduate students?[10] Did the teachers feel it was worthwhile? Was the cost reasonable? Are there any tangible or observable results? Don't take these offers at face value. Clanking credentials do not a wise man make!

The Loose Lip Profession

As you begin to move in community circles, as well as broader school circles, you might wish to remember a comment made many years ago by some sociologist who has sunk into well deserved oblivion. Teaching will never be a profession, observed the anonymous pundit, because it does not police its own and instead constantly gossips about its own.

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[9] Clinton administration.

[10] One superintendent fumed, "I'm sick and tired of having my district used for graduate students to cut their teeth on!"

Whether the image is generally accurate or not, it has roots of truth. In the supermarket it is rare, if not impossible, to hear Nurse Betty chatting on over her shopping cart about what a mess Dr. Ruff made of his latest heart surgery. Despite all the nurse-doctor tension in the profession, one doesn't hear even Dr. Ruff regaling his cronies at the country club with tales of Nurse Betty's incompetence. Nor do either of them air their grievances against the hospital administration, and they certainly don't engage in casual conversation about their patients. The same can be said of lawyers, or dentists, or ministers.

But to hear teachers talk about their students or other teachers or their principal as they stroll through the shopping aisles, or to hear principals sigh about their teachers at the local lunch counter, or to hear all of them despair about district personnel is, unhappily, an all too common coin.

As a woman administrator, it is especially to your benefit to break this mold. Although we women all know that men are as bad if not worse and more vicious gossips than we are, the stereotype stands that gossip is the province of women. Surprise everybody! Refuse to be baited into these conversations. Don't shake the very flagpole you're climbing!

CHAPTER 8

Feet and Faces

Above and Below

When climbing the flagpole, or the corporate ladder, it is inevitable that there are people above you, some of them with their feet in your face, and people below you, on whose faces you may be stepping. There are people above you who deliberately try to step on your face, and those below you on whose faces you need to step.

You will not please everyone. Some experts in administration suggest that after five years in the job, if you have not alienated a percentage of the people,[1] you have taken no significant action. You cannot be an administrator and please everyone. You cannot climb a flagpole without stepping on some faces. That is a simple truth.

As you enter into the fray of flagpole-climbing, people management will provide the greatest, never-ending challenge. Even widely acclaimed CEOs of the corporate world reply to their interviewers that managing people is everything.[2] When to duck, when to retaliate, when to abstain, when to crush are some of the most important decisions you will make.

Safety net-working

However splendid a lateral network you weave for yourself, it pales in comparison to the importance of the safety net you weave for yourself among the people

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[1] One writer puts the figure as high as 50%.

[2] Tandem Corporation CEO Treiberg, for example, in a public television special.

"under" you. Whether these people are "under" you because you are the boss who can hire and fire them, or are "under" you in a persuasive sense because you are the consultant or non-line supervisor, they have the keenest interest in your job performance. It is with them that you must create not just a first impression visibility, but a continuing, growing acceptance. It is here that you will ultimately succeed or fail.

Your Foot, Clerical Faces

The most obvious and in many ways the most important face looking up at you is that of your secretary.[3] Be careful not to step on it. For administrators on the corporate ladders of business and industry, dealing with secretaries may be easier simply because they have done it or seen it done throughout their career. Typically, the school administrator finds herself with a secretary, or part of a secretary, without benefit of any prior experience in how to deal well with her.

Yet, a good secretary is a key element in administrative success. In schools, the school secretary is, in her own way, head of her empire. In an office a good secretary can cut your task time in half, cover your mistakes, fend off timesuckers, field phone calls, and in general keep boosting you right on up the flagpole.

You will probably inherit your secretary; rarely do you have the opportunity to start off hiring one, and that may be just as well. You need a secretary who can at least spell reasonably well and who can realize if she has omitted one whole sentence of a letter. She will realize the omission if she has some grasp of what the letter is saying.

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[3] If you have "clerical help," the same rules apply.

Do not take for granted that every secretary does. This "comprehension" skill is more important to you than dictation speed. You can slow down your dictating much more easily than agonizing over every letter through several re-writes until it is all there and all spelled correctly.[4] Conversely, her speed skills can be improved. Her lack of comprehension might be, too, but not in time to help you on the job. If your secretary does understand what you are saying in your letters and memos and reports, you can survive. If she does not, you need to devise a plan to replace her with someone who does.

On the other hand, you cannot expect too much of your secretary. You cannot expect perfection in every letter or report. One state level male administrator had a habit, every time the secretary handed him a letter, of holding it up to the light to make sure there was nary a speck of white-out. As time wore on and secretaries quit, it became very difficult to find anyone willing to work for him.

In these days of word processors, corrections are not difficult as long as they are not legion. You do need to proof personally what goes out of your office. In education, where we are all supposed to know how to spell, mistakes meet with even greater criticism than if they came out of the corporate machine.

Do not expect your secretary to make up for your lost time. There is nothing more irritating to a secretary than to observe her boss(es) laughing, chatting, and whiling the afternoon away, until suddenly at four o'clock they dash off a rough draft and hand it to her, insisting that it must be "typed in final form" that same day. If it needs to be done that day, you see to it that your secretary has sufficient time to type it.

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[4] Spell-check programs on the computer are only a partial solution; the computer cannot distinguish if whether/weather is correct. Both are "spelled" OK. English has hundreds of such non-interchangeable combinations.

There are legal implications: you cannot simply keep her overtime. The law does not allow it. But more overriding are the good will relations. Your secretary is a person, too, with a life beyond her desk and your work. As a woman, you are much more likely to appreciate that, and so you have an edge. Some men are astonishingly slow to realize how to treat secretaries. One of the authors was sitting for a few minutes at her secretary's desk one day when a salesman visiting one of the staff came over, dropped a handwritten sheet, and said, "Type that up for me, will you? I need it before I leave." Yes, women definitely can have an edge in dealing wisely with a secretary.

You cannot expect intellectual feats of your secretary. She cannot do your job. If she could, she would not be working as a secretary. You cannot ask her to draft anything other than a routine reply, nor expect her to include nuance and tone as you would. One of the most difficult tasks in a state agency, and this for the "professionals," is to capture the tone and spirit of the State Superintendent when drafting a letter for his signature. For most of us, it is not an easy thing to write someone else's prose!

You cannot hand her notes and expect her to organize the content. You cannot hand her a draft so rough that it is still "pieced together" and expect her to see your overarching outline. Do not ask of her what she cannot do. Like most people in education, she wants to do a good job. Make it easy for her to do so.

You cannot expect your secretary to "know" what is most important on your list of tasks. If you are

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sharing a secretary, you cannot expect her to make decisions about whose work gets done first. If there is a problem, you negotiate it with the other party. Being caught in the middle is a secretary's nightmare. She wants to please, but there are human limitations. Make sure your secretary is not backed into this kind of corner, not by you and not by anyone else. Above all, do not allow colleagues to "borrow" her, or hand her work because their own secretary is out, sick, or overloaded. That is their problem, not yours. Nothing is more demeaning to a secretary's professionalism than to be rented out like a public campsite.

Remember National Secretary's Week! Remember her birthday! A happy secretary can make your paperwork feather light. She will in addition be your good will ambassador among other secretaries who have the ear of their boss. She will probably stay in her job much longer, sparing you the time and energy of training someone new. She will be your best ally, the one person who truly wants you to be successful, for her prestige is derived from you. The higher you rise, the higher she rises. No one else in the school or district office or state agency can make that statement.

Your Foot, Professional Faces

If you are a principal or assistant principal, you have your faculty. If you are a district-level or state-level administrator, your "staff" is out in the schools, the district(s), and in addition you may have staff within the agency. Whether you have line authority or staff authority, there are still people below you on the flagpole.

There are a number of theories of how to be a "good" administrator, but in general they present only one side of the equation: you. How you behave and how you prioritize and how you communicate. Are you a task-oriented manager or a people-oriented manager. Are you a minute-manager? And so on through the various theories and advice.

What makes administration so tricky is the other side of the equation: the people you manage. True, it is a group of people, but they are not all the same. Not only do they behave differently and respond differently, but they expect differently. Their expectations of you are not homogeneous.

As a woman administrator, you may have staff members who expect you to be the super-peer and supportive colleague who sits with them and reasons. Others expect you to be the appreciative woman who nods and admires. Still others expect you to be an authoritative mother/father figure who takes charge and/or protects them from various evil-doers. You may even have one or two who expect you to be the dutiful daughter who heeds their parental advice.

All of these require you to juggle them, sometimes by design, sometimes by immediate action, adapting yourself not only to situations, but responding in ways that satisfy all these different expectations. Such is the *art* of administration.

Staffing for Success

Just as the people within the scope of your authority have different expectations of you, you must learn how best to shape your expectations of them.

If you inherit an "incompetent" staff, you may find that it is not the people who are incompetent but the way that work is distributed. What are their real talents and skills? Are they doing jobs that make best use of their best talents? Are there circumstances that make it difficult for them to do their best job? You may find, in your private analysis of the group, that you have some square pegs in round holes.

For example, a kindly, soft-hearted educator who knows good teaching when he sees it should not be given the responsibility of high school discipline. This is not the person to deal with repeat offenders, addicts, felons, and drug dealers.[5] He will never be "tough" enough for enforcing hardball discipline, confronting violent hostility, and withstanding the strain of courtroom appearances. Even if he attempts it, he won't last long. This man has other talents. You need to find out what they are and put them to good use. He will be happier, you will be happier, and your overall output as a working unit will be upgraded.

Perhaps you have a staff member who travels to other schools or districts in some kind of consultant capacity, giving workshops so inadequate that he is generally regarded as a figure of fun. You do not, of course, want this kind of representation out there. People from your office who represent you should arrive in schools or districts with your same positive, professional attitude and, of course, professional competence. If you find individuals who do not, individuals who enjoy clanking their titles at the "little people," you need to communicate your expectations and subtly find out if appropriate changes in attitude have been made.

For the less than dynamic representative, you may find that he has in-office talents, such as a mind for fine detail that glazes the eyes of workshop participants but can significantly lighten some of your own office routine. Do him a favor and yourself a favor and future workshop victims a favor. Keep him in the office and provide him with a more suitable framework for his personal success. Match tasks to individual strengths, and yours will be a much more productive and much more harmonious workplace.

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[5] In case you are unaware, such is the normal scope of discipline in an average high school. Naturally, in an inner city school, it is much more grim.

Women are supposed to be sensitive and intuitive, which is always a plus in administration where people management is so crucial. But you would do well not to depend exclusively on "gut feelings" for your administrative decisions, especially if these decisions involve administrative changes.

One of the tools we have both found very useful for prudent staffing is the work of Anthony Gregorc which takes the administrator into a dimension beyond observable skills and talents into people's personal work-mode preferences.[6] This type of analysis enables you to identify which of your staff will enjoy and be successful, for example, within the chaos of taking tickets at a game or handling field trips with very small children, and which will enjoy and be successful, for example, at shaping up after-school detention or structuring a format for the parent newsletter.

You may also find, as you analyze your staff, that their output is hampered by negativism and low expectations. Your problem is not staffing but morale. That same positive attitude that is forever preached to teachers is equally valid for the administrative ear. One principal effected a seemingly miraculous transformation of a down-at-the-mouth small rural middle school. In three years, he had a smoothly functioning, cheerful, progressively innovative school filled with reasonably happy children.

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[6] Anthony Gregorc, in his workshops and publications on learning and thinking styles, analyzes personality in terms of work preference types, using the polar dichotomies of concrete-abstract and random-sequential. If you are not familiar with his work, we would strongly recommend that you read it and have your staff take a few minutes to fill out his indicator test.

What was so impressive about his accomplishment was that he did it with the selfsame faculty he had inherited.[7] He simply turned their expectations around and boosted their morale. Among his many gimmicks were Wednesday afternoon faculty volleyball games, personalized coffee mugs, monthly faculty meetings where a different grade level "hosted" the breakfast, and of course, a total clean-up of the school building and grounds. But at the center of all these ploys was the positive, energetic attitude of the man himself. Nor was this simply hype generated for a presentation at a principal's conference. One of the authors had the happy privilege of sitting, as an unknown identity, in the faculty room for over an hour one ordinary Wednesday morning. The attitude was authentic and unrehearsed.

This administrator understood the problem. He set the tone, he set the pace. Everything else fell into line. It is called "leadership." Women can do it just as well as men. Perhaps, with our "intuitive, probing natures," even better.

You may find that you have individuals who, with just a little frank criticism, can improve their own job performance. You may even find, as you seek to remedy the ills, that you have some real jewels who with a little polish will sparkle and credit you with the omnipotent wisdom that rescued them from anonymity. One elementary school principal of inglorious fame, after one session with a new superintendent, saw what he was doing wrong and became one of the best elementary school principals in the state.

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[7] For the sake of accuracy, be it noted he did, in his first year, fire one male teacher, but only because the teacher hit a student and there was no other choice.

"He showed me how I could do it right," the principal told one of the authors. "I just wish someone had done it earlier."

Happily, in education there is probably a much greater percentage, as compared to the business world, of individuals who truly want to do a good job and find considerable intrinsic satisfaction in it. Not many people go into education for the money or the prestige.

As you manage these well-meaning individuals, you will learn through experience how to improve your administrative artistry. You will devise ways and responses which allow your staff to experience those Maslovian rewards to the brain, like self-actualization and recognition.

You will learn the_*art* of praise so that it rings true and is valued by your staff. Insincere, artless praise is worse than none at all. One of the authors used to observe with dismay as a "higher up" (male), who had read about the importance of praise, from time to time arrived on the floor and, like a wind-up toy, made the rounds, nodding at each human form and muttering, "Hear you're doing a good job." He didn't know what anyone was doing, they knew he didn't know, and far from being pleased, many were offended. It was, albeit unintentionally, a foot in the face. It said without words that these people were not important enough for him really to find out what they were doing.

Artful praise in the workplace is not only sincere but specific. Furthermore, and for women regarding male staff members this is particularly important, praise deals with professional accomplishment, never his person, his clothing, or his personality. "You're just the sweetest man ever!" simply will not do, even if you are absolutely sincere. The closest to "personal" one can get with impunity is either an obvious good turn, such as changing your tire, or praise for his family, e.g., "You must be so proud of your daughter's winning the music competition." Praise for some accomplishment of his wife is even better. This is also a good rule to follow when dealing with women staff members. They are in the workplace to do a job and want recognition for that job, not for the new mauve suit that's such a good color for them.

Artful praise is also, when possible, said in public, before at least one other person, because with an audience the words sing more sweetly in the heart of the praised. Occasionally, the artful praiser can praise and admonish all at the same time, speaking kind words on his management objective to A in the presence of B who is late and lazy with his. However, this is a tricky trick, because A probably knows about B's situation and may feel that your praise of him was only to admonish B, and A will resent that.

In summary, you will endeavor always to keep your foot out of those faces that are directly below you. You will clear the path of obstacles so that your race horses can run. You will hold out a steadying hand for the less agile, so that they, too, can run the course and credit you for helping them succeed. The final truth is, their success is your success.

Your Foot, Sneering Faces

Unhappily, you probably will have on your staff at least one individual who does not feel any missionary spark and who may not even wish you well, often for motives that are not purely professional. If there are unpleasant individuals in your working environment, they are much more likely to surface when they sense weakness. And for these individuals a woman administrator reeks of *eau d'foiblesse.*

Our first suggestion would be that you accept these unpleasant people as inevitable reality. Of course you don't look for them nor expect to find them. You will always keep in mind that they are the minority, not the majority. Their emergence, sometimes totally unexpected, should be met not with anger nor hurt feelings nor outrage. It should provoke in you only one reaction: should you step on this face, or ignore it?

Probably one of the first types to surface is one mentioned earlier, the "could have been," who claims he was offered your job but turned it down. This person is not worth stepping on. If he had been qualified, he would have your job. If you are new to the system, his claim is even shakier. Nine times out of ten, he was never invited to take the job, and most people know it. The longer and louder he proclaims that he "could have been," and as people see you efficiently taking charge, the more and more hollow his voice will ring until it drowns into the abyss.

On the other hand, if you are responsible for a school, one type you must ferret out and fire as soon as possible is one who is actually hurting children. Individuals who are dangerous to children and, consequently, to your legal position, must be dealt with and dismissed. You must make your school a safe place. The vicious, dangerous face that slaps children or arrives drunk and irresponsible can be stepped on with relatively little legal entanglement. The mental abuser whose classroom ego trips destroy children will take longer. Make friends with your school attorney. Consult right from the beginning with your attorney so that you are not foiled by having omitted some step required by law.

Next are the incompetent teachers. This is harder to do. Even a totally incompetent teacher is difficult to dismiss. In one sad case in the south, where there are not even strong unions, a new principal documented and dismissed for all the right reasons a particularly incompetent faculty member. The man sued, and the Court ruled that, since the school board had permitted the man to teach incompetently for fifteen years, they could not now dismiss him. He was re-hired. We leave the quality of his classes to your imagination. We leave the situation in a district with a strong teachers' union to your imagination.

But just because it is hard to do cannot be an excuse not to try. Occasionally an administrator can work with the union because of the personalities involved, but more often this is not an option because the administrator is the enemy, the teacher (not the students) is the victim, and the matter will go to court. There are, however, other ways to encourage the person to transfer, or to resign, such as difficult schedules, assignments and duties which that person especially dislikes, denial of assignments and outings that the person especially likes.

This ploy was learned in the Halls of Academe, where individuals "not bad enough to fire and not old enough to retire" were given, for example, an 8 o'clock class and a 4 o'clock class and, if possible, a Saturday class, and none of them in their area of specialty. Some large universities exile their "unwanteds" to their regional campuses, adding the burden of driving to the irksome schedule. Sometimes this "depressing work environment" procedure takes time and, if it is dealing with a teacher, meanwhile students still suffer. But at least there is hope that there will be an endpoint to it.

On the lighter side of the downside are the displaced best friends of your predecessor. These people need to be evaluated as individuals, but don't let the smiles fool you. It is not an easy thing to stand so close to "the throne" and then lose your place in the sun. It is important for you to understand whether or not their former position granted them special privileges, or whether they merely enjoyed the position of influence. If it is a matter of privilege, naturally that must stop, for one person's privilege is another person's grievance.

If it is a matter of influence, there you must decide on the individual by his or her actions, and that will emerge only with time. Are these actions supportive of your work and your plans? Or are they subtly stonewalling you or engaging in some of the behaviors described below. If these former friends are supportive, as shown by their actions over a period of time (not their smiling words!), then accept that they have made the transition with grace and professionalism.

You may have on your staff the whiner who continually threatens to resign. There is only one response: step on his face. Pleasantly but firmly advise him that your desk is always open to a letter of resignation. You have no other option, unless you enjoy blackmail. This whiner needs to understand that this threat will gain him nothing at all, no pleas, no concessions, no emotional reaction from you.

Firm action regarding the loudest whiner can be effective. When one of the authors first arrived as principal of an elementary school and found three resignations on her desk, one of them stated flatly that he would not work for a woman. She called him in, realizing that he expected her to attempt to persuade him to stay and that he further expected to extract certain concessions if he agreed.

Instead she asked him if he had a preference about where he wanted to transfer. Startled, he named a school. The author picked up the phone, called the principal of that school, introduced herself, and asked if this man could be transferred there. As luck would have it, by the time she hung up the phone, the transfer was a reality. It was not what the man had planned at all. But she rid herself of a potential trouble-maker and sent a clear message to "followers" that resignation was not a game of barter. It was a step out the door. In our opinion, there is no other way to respond, especially if you are a woman. You are being tested for strength of will. Demonstrate it, unequivocally, and squash that face sneering up at you.

Closely allied are the deadbeat and the absentee. Give either of them a task to do, and they will let you down, with a flurry of feathery excuses that may be attempting to cover up incompetence or may be covering up passive sabotage. One way of dealing with these individuals is to leave them out of all important decisions and activities. If they are not a part of it, they cannot damage it.

Again, one way of dealing with these individuals is to assign them whatever tasks they can do least well and/or dislike most. Be quick to monitor and document their failure to accomplish assignments. Be a picture of "strained patience" when pointing out their failures. Your purpose is not to make them feel swell. Your purpose is to corner them into resigning, or ultimately, if documentation accumulates, to put yourself in a position to fire them.

You may have on your staff the palace rebel. This person could do everything better than you are doing it and says so at every opportunity (behind your back, of course!) Palace rebels come in a wide assortment. Some are clowns, producing much sound and fury that means nothing; whoever the administrator is, Clown could do it better. No one takes him seriously, and neither should you.

Other palace rebels will actively plot to overthrow you. This can be very disheartening, and at times embittering when someone you believed was supportive unmasks himself as leader of the rebel forces. We would remind you of Richelieu's wisdom when he was urged to take revenge on just such a palace rebel. "It is his right to try to overthrow me," said the Frenchman with a sniff of his spiced orange, "and my duty to prove he can't do it." Outsmart this rebel, outthink him, block his attempts at a coup by being "there" first.

If you are clever at this sort of thing, give him enough rope to hang himself. Depending on the circumstances, the rope may entail giving him (or her) something to do that he/she wili seize upon and not do well, or it may be shifting responsibilities around to weaken his/her influence or downsize his/her “forum.” Your sense of timing needs to be good, so that when he or she takes that one step too far (which he/she will) but before he/she does any serious damage, you can snarl "insubordination" and perhaps even fire him, or her.

Once you have won, in this particular case we do not especially recommend an open arm policy. This is a restless personality who will quickly forget your forgiveness and will soon be scheming your downfall again, if he/she thinks you are lulled into complacency. Your one safeguard, after the rebel has showed himself, is to ensure that he is in no position to scheme or sabotage anything of importance. You may also want to advise him about attractive job openings elsewhere. It is a charming way to grind your high heel in his face.

Other palace rebels will never openly oppose you, but they will create, like static on a radio, a constant buzz of negativism that hangs over the office like a gray mist and keeps morale from ever reaching "sunny." Like the mist, this type of rebel is difficult to deal with because it is so hard to put your finger on any specific "wrong." You can try speaking frankly to him (again, it also could be her), but the chances are excellent that he will deny all, you will be able to prove nothing, and the victory is his.[8] You may be able to keep him so busy that he has no time to sit in the teachers' lounge or the coffee shop and throw darts into your back. You may even be in a position to have him out on the road for long periods of time.

Or you may wish to try fighting fire with fire by using another of the downside individuals: the gossip. It is very useful to identify the individual, which every school and every office seems to harbor, whose mission and rapture in life is to hear gossip and spread it about. Confide in him, and in ten minutes the word will have made the rounds. From time to time you will find this little weakness of his most useful, and one of the times is in dealing with the "gray mist rebel."

Confide in your gossip through discreet hints. "Poor fellow, I guess he must be very unhappy. But it's his own doing," or words to that effect. The trick is to say nothing specific, only to intimate that things are going very badly for the "rebel's" career, and be sure to ask the gossip not to mention it. Then sit back and relax. Your gossip will take it from there, and a fine blow will have been dealt the rebel.

A cousin of the rebel is the climber who seeks to destroy you by going over your head. Unfortunately, although he would try this game anyway, because you are a woman he will try it sooner. Here is someone to be stepped on immediately. But before you call him in, meet with your immediate superior. You need first to block off any escape routes about you. Your problem, if this starts to happen, goes beyond your climber. A competent administrator *never* deals with his subordinate's subordinate. A competent administrator would have sent "Joe" packing back to submit his agenda "through channels."

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[8] The classic example of this type, of course, was played by Fred MacMurray in *The Caine Mutiny*.

Explain calmly to your immediate superior that you understand "Joe" went to him with a project/idea/request about which you had no prior knowledge. Explain, if explanation is needed, that if "Joe" sees no need to go through you, others cannot be expected to do so. It may be that your superior doesn't know any better than to allow channel-jumping, or perhaps "Joe" caught him off guard because they've worked together for many years. Or, it may be that your immediate superior has done this deliberately to keep his own hand on the controls and to undermine the extent of your authority. If the latter is the case, you have a problem that merits very serious action.[9]

Assuming your superior had been misled into thinking that "Joe" had already discussed it with you, and assuming that your superior has no intention of allowing this kind of channel-jumping, and the two of you have come to a harmonious agreement, then you have effectively blocked all escape routes. Next, you call in "Joe" to set the score straight.

This should *not* be a friendly meeting. You should express your disgust. Let "Joe" know that you are not threatened in any way by his actions, but that you consider them improper and are surprised at such unprofessional procedure. Explain to "Joe" that such behavior is considered insubordination, and we all know that insubordination is grounds for immediate dismissal.

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[9] More about how to deal with this later.

Next assure "Joe" that if he has a reasonable proposal, you will be happy to take it up through channels, and he may attend these "channel meetings" with you. This offer can do you no harm and avoids your appearing to be an autocratic paranoid afraid to let your staff be in contact with the hierarchy. Let "Joe" leave with the unspoken certainty that he will get no support for anything if he pulls this stunt again, because "stunt" it is. Make no mistake about that!

The most difficult ill-wisher of all is the competitor from another office. Perhaps it is another of the assistant principals, or perhaps it is a consultant in another field, or perhaps it is a research versus curriculum battle, or perhaps simply a power play for control and who has the "say-so" about the course that education will navigate. This person presents a thornier problem in one sense because he is in no way responsible to you. He is a free agent, and as such free to undermine you, if he can. On the other hand, this person is not a constant presence in your professional life. Grow, gather strength, extend your power, and await your opportunities to win battles.

The Feet above You

It is an administrative platitude that you strive first and foremost to please your immediate superior. It is usually he (or she?) who evaluates you. Much more frequently, it is he who reports and comments informally on your performance, thus forging your image "up there." It is he who may or may not recommend you for promotion. Certainly he can block it if he chooses.

Respect is the key. Respect his priorities. If it is important to him that you be available "on call," be available. If it is important to him that his secretary has a copy of everything, see that the copy is delivered. If it is important to him that someone being paid at a professional's salary not spend time doing clerical work, keep your hands off the word processor.[10] If it is important to him that he always be consulted on one particular type of thing, do so.

Respect his time. If you need to see him, call his secretary first. If your situation is less structured, make sure he doesn't have someone else in the office. If your situation is highly structured, make an appointment. When you see him, present what he needs to know. Have it organized in your mind before you step in the door. Have any pertinent papers, memos, facts that may relate, but don't go through each and every one. Use your judgment as to what needs to be told, what he needs to see, what he merely needs to know is available, and what you should have with you, in case he wants to see it. In this way you maximize your use of his time.

On the other hand, if he calls you in "for a minute" and you find yourself in a two-hour meeting with visiting persons, smile, be judiciously gracious, and realize that you are being "included" by your boss, not imposed upon. Do not glance at your watch, and do not excuse yourself because "you are busy." You are *never* as busy as your immediate superior -- at least, in theory.

Respect his image. One of the best things you can do is make him (or possibly her) look good. If someone from "up there" calls down to you because your boss is not available, let your boss know of the call. During the call, snide remarks like, "I don't know. I put it on his desk a week ago," or "I guess he hasn't gotten around to discussing it with me yet," do much more damage to your image than to his. Also, let your boss know about the call and if the caller was curious, concerned, or irate. Then leave it to his judgment as to how to handle it.

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[10] Obviously, if you are temporarily without a secretary, you have a reason. However, if your secretary isn't getting the work done, you have a problem: either she is being overloaded or she is inefficient. Fix your problem; don't irritate your boss.

Similarly, if you create or cannot handle a problem within your area of authority, such as a teacher-bashing parent, let your boss know immediately. You need to inform him of anything about which he is liable to get an unexpected call. In the first place, it is fair; you don't hang him on the yardarm to receive a broadside. In the second place, it gives you the opportunity to review the situation with him objectively, before irate callers have their say. And, if it is a case where you have goofed, he's bound to find out. Even if it can be camouflaged, someone will tell him. Better it be you.

Respect his office. In many schools, school districts, and certainly the state agency, jumping over your immediate superior is one of the cardinal sins. Go through channels.[11]

Another and perhaps greater cardinal sin, available to entrap school administrators but rarely a lure for the corporate executive, is to whip up public opinion in order to get your own way. Urging parents to call in or sending a letter to the newspaper to insist on a fine arts requirement is a good way for a fine arts consultant to get fired.

Respect his well-being. A happy boss will make your life happier. What kinds of things can you do that will make his, or her, professional life easier? What kinds of conflicts can you resolve without having to bother your boss? What gossips can you waylay and diffuse? What kinds of small tasks can you take off his/her back? What kinds of small improvements can you initiate without stepping on toes that will make the school more attractive or the office more efficient? What can you do to make the boss look good to the administration above him and to the community surrounding him?

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[11] The immediate superior who is ill-intentioned or dismayingly incompetent will be dealt with later.

Respect his vision, or her vision, as the case may be. What kinds of things would he, or she, like to see happen in the school(s)? What kinds of things can you do, or help him do, to give this vision a little more substance? Most educators have a vision of how our schools should be. If you are part of his, or her, effort to move towards this far-off land, he, or she, will consider you a fine school administrator.

Troops and Commanders

While the corporate maxim is "keep your boss happy," the military maxim is "keep your men happy." As a school administrator, you need to do both. It is important that your immediate superior be happy, that he gets things in time to move them up channels, that he sees his operation working more smoothly because of you. But, as we have tried to emphasize, it is even more important that the people under your authority see their professional lives enriched, expanded, and validated because of you.

Sometimes you will be pushed to the ultimate diplomacy. If, for example, your boss wants you to "shape up" your office in the wake of someone he considered slack or incompetent, find ways to do so without alienating your staff. Work out a compromise if you must, but do not allow your boss' anger with your predecessor to put you in the position of the strong-arm dictator. If the office has traditions that belittle the professionalism of your teachers or staff, see if you can eventually persuade your boss to allow a change.

It is a common practice at all levels of school administration to withhold information, because information is power. If I know something and you don't, I hold the advantage. Many administrators (men for the most part) operate on this premise.

We would suggest, however, that in matters that directly concern your staff, it is a wiser administrative practice to share whatever information you have and be frank about what information is simply not yet available. In dealing with professionals, including professional secretaries, we believe there must be some trust on the part of the administrator that the staff will handle information as professionals, that they will understand what is uncertain if they are given reasons for the uncertainty, that they will accept bad news if they have been forewarned.

We would also remind you that rumor is a virus that grows in an environment where it is known there will be change and there is no authoritative information. Respect the professionalism of your staff, and let them know what you know -- not about everything, but about that which can directly affect them in the near future. If your boss chooses not to be so open with you, that is his choice. Men often have more resistance to open communications than we women.

To expand your position successfully on the flagpole, you need to keep those below you glad you are where you are, keep your immediate superior glad that you are where you are, and people in your network glad to know a woman like you. Then you go home to attend to your personal well-being. It makes for quite a full day.

We never said school administration was easy!

Chapter 9

Pole Power

"I never met a living creature that did not want power."

If you do not increase your power, you decrease it.[1] If you do not seek to increase your area of responsibility, you relegate yourself to a passive role within the administrative structure. How is that avoided? By never ceding "space" in any sense.

If you do not expand your power, then, as in all wars of purely defensive fighting, you are doomed. It is only a matter of time. Consequently, you never relinquish a staff position. You never relinquish an area of responsibility. You never cease to gather in under your administrative wings appropriate projects and responsibilities that will expand your own power.[2]

As a woman, you have a built-in advantage in this power war. Men do not expect women to understand it. Men, in large part, expect a woman to care for her job as she cares for her house. She sweeps and mops and fusses about, but she does not venture out further. If she does want something, she is expected to fall back on the usual feminine wiles, in which case the dominant male may grant or not grant the request. She surprises no one with an occasional tantrum, because those are things that emotion-ruled women do, even those who insist on administrative jobs. Men, for the most part, are not expecting tactical power games from women. They do not expect women to know about them, understand them, or be able to counter them. They certainly do not expect women to play them.

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[1] A maxim of Michael Korda in his "classic" *Power: How to Get It, How to Use It* (Random House, NY: 1975). The title quote is, of course Nietzsche.

[2] This does not refer to the drudgework of others, but that which brings with it new funds, adds competent staff, or increases the parameters of your authority.

It is true that the struggles for power in the corporate world for education are relatively tame in comparison to those in other corporate worlds. At the same time, power that you acquire is obtained by diminishing someone else's power. That cannot be helped. If you get more funds for your school, others get less for theirs. If your district office secretary is upgraded, someone else was not. If the maintenance men attend to your air conditioning first, someone else is sitting by a small, whirring fan. If requirements for your subject area are increased in the minimum state program, requirements elsewhere must perforce be decreased. If the mandated proportion of guidance counselor per students is reduced to a smaller load, principals have to take salary money and position count away from something else to meet the new requirement.

There is precious little "give" in school finances except for tax increases and private sector donations. Similarly, staff ratios and school year time frames are iron-girded by laws and regulations. Yet, within this inflexible framework, all educators want the best for their programs, their schools, their districts. To the administrators falls the struggle to obtain "the best," and it is power that determines who triumphs.

Donning Your Armor

One kind of protection that will help you in these little power struggles is information. It is a platitude of management that information *is* power. It is not power in the sense that you can blackmail someone whom you espy kissing the wrong face in the parking lot. It is power in the sense that the more you know, the broader, deeper grasp you have of your power environment. Therefore you can make better and swifter decisions, reactive or proactive.

There are two general categories of valuable information in the corporate world of education. One is professional, an understanding of fields and areas other than your own. Since your first steps in search of a flagpole, you have attempted to develop the "superintendent's perspective." You have tried to see the school world around you in all its dimensions. You need to continue this effort through your own observations and through information from your network.

This is a kind of information that educators too often are content to ignore. In curriculum, for example, subject area specialists often know little about each other's field and less about vocational education. Finance people often have little knowledge of instructional programs. Research people often have no knowledge of either. And none of them are especially conversant with school bus problems, or maintenance and buildings, or food services.

It is to your power advantage to learn what you can about all of them. You do not need to take courses or learn how to generate research predictability formulas or install a light panel, but you need to learn what people in other fields consider to be issues, how they view the world, what goals they set for their part of the corporate world. It is not in-depth technical information that you need but general knowledge combined with a grasp of attitudes and perspective. Women are usually fairly skilled at absorbing this kind of information which requires a certain amount of professional empathy.

Your storehouse of professional knowledge and understandings will build gradually, but it is well worth any time you spend on it. You will be in a much better position to discuss and negotiate with educators in other areas when your paths cross. You will understand the pitfalls, and you will know, so to speak, which persuasion buttons to push. Case in point: If you are aware that school bus people feel put down and their contributions ignored by school personnel in general, you will handle your dealings with them much more wisely than some man who never gave the matter much thought.

Additionally, you will be seen by educators in other professional areas as someone with whom cooperative ventures and projects are possible, and cooperative ventures tend to enhance your own power base. Or, if the juncture of your paths arises from a conflict of interest, the others will at least respect you and probably be pleasantly surprised that you have some grasp of, if not agreement with, their concerns. If their concern is not genuine but a springboard for a power play, you have a much better chance of recognizing it and blocking it. Case in point: when Economics became a required course, it became a part of the Social Studies curriculum. Vocational Education wanted their teachers, under Consumer Education, to be allowed to teach it. To leave the "best teacher" decision up to each school principal made sense, but the concern turned out to be a power play: Voc Ed wanted *only* their teachers to have these classes; they wanted to cut Social Studies teachers out altogether.

When there is a unilateral, self-serving agenda, cooperative ventures are best cut off immediately.

When one party tries to lead you into a mid-position while that same party remains clinging firmly to a polar position, you can only lose power. But a true cooperative venture, in which both parties benefit, not only improves education and your corner of it but your personal lateral network and, perforce, your power.

There is also what might be termed socio-political information[3], about people and situations in your extended work environment. How are you going to use this type of information? We don't know. The uses of this kind of information are not predictable. They are a bank account against a rainy day. You learn one item and tuck it away. At some point, chances are very good that it will make a sudden match with some new item and give you an insight that others don't have. Women are usually good at assimilating this kind of information, too, because we don't mind taking the time to listen.

To draw from a real life example, let us say you must deal with Jeanette, a teacher who has eighteen years of experience, the same year over and over eighteen times. She rants at you that other teachers have no discipline and no standards and you are doing nothing about it. Now, you happen to know that Jeanette's TV screen in her classroom has a daily crop of spitballs on it, which does not bespeak good discipline in Jeanette's own class. How do you know about the spitballs? You chat briefly from time to time with Nancy, the cleaning lady who does that hall, and you ask after her health, her favorite topic of conversation. Nancy gave you the spitball information, and Jeanette has now provided you a use for it. You can fire it, in a well-timed volley, and blow cranky Jeanette out of the water.

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[3] Or sophisticated gossip.

To cite another example, in your chats with the state director of school food services, you learn that the federal government is handing down huge handfuls of money to food services for nutrition education. In chatting, you learn that the director finds this distressing, because she has food service people, not curriculum people. Now, if you happen to have curriculum people, you can use this information to send through channels your willingness to work with food services to develop the nutrition education materials, providing, of course, that the budget moneys come under your purview.

Or, to cite a third example, one superintendent, newly appointed to the post, through jovial, informal chats on the golf links and savory seafood dinners during the state conference for school superintendents, identified five excellent educators (no, they were not all men) who were unhappy with their current situation. As soon as he got home, he contacted them and brought them in to interview. Soon he had assembled an awesome staff and his district board members were very impressed that their new superintendent could attract such a fine quality of candidates.

The more people you know, the more information you have. Naturally, this information is secret, silent information, which you guard as you might well hidden artillery. You lose your advantage if you share your bits of information with others . It is akin to handing out maps of your artillery emplacements. The more information you have, the more power, -- pleasant, hidden, unexpected power -- you have. Make contacts out of your normal channels. Listen and learn and remember. Let each piece of the puzzle add to your crystal ball. You may not be able to predict the future, but you'll come closer than the man who has no time for other people's problems.

The Crusader

Another way to protect yourself and increase your own power is to choose your goals and projects wisely. In corporate administration, the goal is profit, and the creed is winner-take-all. In school administration, multiple goals all coalesce into one: what is good for students. The creed of the wise school administrator is winner-take-along-as-many-as possible. In school administration, you lose nothing by enlarging your winners' circle to include not only students, but your own staff, community groups, or perhaps even another office of proven friendship.[4]

In so many power struggles in other corporate worlds, the victory is narrow in focus: one man gets a bonus, one professor gets on a committee. In the corporate world of education, your victories can encircle by their glow large groups of people: new landscaping for the school for all to enjoy, a strong arts program, an activity bus, teacher aides, and yes, even the football district championship and the marching band trophy.

When you undertake a new project, evaluate it always as to its potential for winners. The more winners you can carry with you, the more glory and the more power. Those who would downplay athletics might ponder the wide circle of "winners" created by a winning team: the players on the team, parents and friends of the player, the student body hollering at the pep rally, the cheerleaders (and their parents and friends), the coaches, student sportscasters, perhaps the band, the flag corps, and of course, basking in all this reflected glow, the administration.

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[4] But not your competitors. Let us not be naive!

Naturally, when you initiate a new project, you will meet with some resistance, some objections, and "we tried that once." Pay no attention. Such reluctance emanates from those too fearful or too inert to make any changes at all. A case in point: the social studies teacher who tried single-handedly to undo the whole plan for a 9th grade team by refusing to move to another (even nicer) room three doors down the same hall so that the 9th grade team could be housed together.

Before you initiate any action at all, it is very important that, as a woman, you make sure to work out the money: how much, for what, and from where. Women are expected to ask for pie-in-the-sky, spending funds as they (stereotypically) spend with their credit cards. Nothing surprises a man more than a detailed, accurate, hard-headed project budget from a woman.

If you have thought the project through, if it is financially feasible, if it is compatible with your conclusions from your earlier connoisseurship, and if it will include many winners in its success, get it off the drawing board. You will not acquire power by adopting a caretaker stance.

Actually, a successful project is easier to execute in education than in business, because many excellent education projects are not expected to produce clean-cut, quantified results. In business and industry, there are facts and figures that measure the margin of profit. Whose idea sells more product, produces more at a faster rate, generates a greater percentage of profit?

In school administration, that kind of narrow accountability is not expected. If you introduce a middle school health education program that includes sex education, no one is going to count the teen-age pregnancies at the end of the fiscal year to see whether or not "it worked."[5]

We are not implying that you should not worry about accountability, or that results don't matter. Our point is that education deals with many intangibles, with issues that have no easy resolution, with the longitudinal development over years of each individual child. No one is questioning, for example, the wisdom of providing special experiences for gifted children, even if we can't measure in June "how they turned out." The questions that beleaguer gifted education concern the process, not the goal.

Consequently, in education people are willing to accept the common sense of a program that simply moves students and schools down the road towards long-term benefits. The deluded voices that want to see test scores "up by 4.8% next year" are rarely educators, and never thoughtful educators. Therefore, you will be successful in "selling" your ideas if your goal makes good sense; it does not have to promise percentages. Your project will enjoy the aura of success if students, schools or teachers in some way have benefited.

There is also a power benefit when you support the projects of others. As long as their project in no way interferes with, limits, or infringes on your own parameters of authority, be supportive of others. Give them your hearty endorsement. Encourage them to tell you of their plans, and if possible do it in front of a staff member or two, or someone from another school/office. This costs you nothing and magnifies your image as an educator who looks beyond her own boundaries.

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[5] Over a 5-year period, perhaps. But the only people who will try for an immediate count are those who oppose it, either because they oppose sex education, or they come from some public health group that wants to rule the school with their own programs and personnel.

And, you are stockpiling allies.[6]

Power through Your Staff

"A school cannot rise above the level of its principal."[7] Your leadership sets the upper range of accomplishment. But you cannot reach your own goals single-handedly. It might also be said that an administrator cannot rise above the sum total of her staff. You have already re-assigned and re-arranged and re-oriented the staff you inherited. As time goes on, you will have the opportunity to strengthen your staff further as you hire new or additional people.

If you have no line authority, improving your "staff" is slow and cumbersome, for you must gently educate those who do the hiring and rarely will you have any direct input. This can be done, especially in the curricular subject areas. A music consultant can, for example, convince administrators that "bandmaster" alone does not a music teacher make. The physical education consultant can convince administrators that "Roll out the ball!" does not a make good PE class. One high school principal, persuaded that oral proficiency was important for foreign language, developed a technique of which he was very proud: "I ask the candidate to speak for a while in the language. I don't know what she's saying, but if she keeps saying the same words over and over, I figure she's not too fluent."

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[6] Of course, we assume you have not heartily endorsed some hopeless malcontent or antediluvian chauvinist who will never make a decent ally. In this, as in all administrative actions, prudent judgment is essential.

[7] John Dawsey

If, on the other hand, you hire directly, you can increase your power or decrease it depending on your hiring decisions. It has been our unflagging observation over the years that strong administrators hire strong people; weak administrators surround themselves with people who are weaker still.

"I'm not very smart," laughed one district superintendent upon receiving plaudits from his peers, "but I'm smart enough to hire smart people who make me look good."[8] This would seem so logical, so obvious, so irrefutable that one can only be amazed at how many administrators shy away from it.

Perhaps they shy away from it, or perhaps they are simply not good judges of character. Interviewing is an art, and, in our opinion, no standard format for questions can take the place of good judgment and questions tailored to the candidate. Of course there must be a similarity of general parameters; otherwise, when you sit down to compare candidates in retrospect, you have the well-known apple-and-oranges problem.

On the other hand, there are questions to ask an itinerant art teacher not only about program but about student management that are not suitable to ask a fourth grade teacher who will be self-contained but is being brought into a grade level where science instruction is particularly weak. The questions for a state consultant in guidance would include, "How would you handle a district superintendent who says he thinks guidance counselors in the elementary schools are a waste of money?" There is no point in posing the problem to a potential mathematics consultant; math programs are not questioned. The questions for a district consultant for fine arts, who will work on her own, are not all the same as for a district consultant for language arts who must work with three others, nor are the questions the same if those three others are competent or if they are one of your less happy inheritances that you are trying to improve. Even if you are required to follow a standard questionnaire, flesh it out with what you really need to know. Hiring is a relatively simple "OK." Firing is a tedious and uncertain legal process.

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[8] Dr. "Hap" Corley.

Many of the standard old interview ploys are good: the handshake, the dress and general appearance, the manner and correctness of speaking. A red flag on a resume is "job-hopping" or gaps in the work record. There can be good explanations, especially for women, because women have babies, follow husbands, are geographically limited to non-job areas, and so forth. But the explanation had better be good.

We personally see nothing wrong, somewhere along in the interview but not as the first shot out of the cannon, in asking a man point blank, "How do you feel about working for a woman?" Do his eyes shift and his hands fidget when he says No? Does he grin and shrug, body relaxed? Does he lean forward, wink and leer?

Do you like this person? What does our famous woman's intuition tell us? If the resume looks good, the interview answers are good, but you "just have a bad feeling" or an unenthusiastic one, we would recommend you look further.

We would also recommend that you have other staff members in on the interview, if the candidate looks like a good possibility. Select two or three of your people whose judgment is sound, who among them have different outlooks (and genders, if possible), and who will be pleased to be asked. This is not trying to spread blame, should the candidate be hired and not work out. But while you are talking to the candidate, the others can watch from a different point of view and from a more detached point of view than someone directly engaged in questions and answer. Then, while they ask a question or two, you can watch with your own detachment. Sometimes what you see will amaze you! Case in point: To one of the authors, she was gracious, informative, and cooperative. To those who would be her peers, she was short and at best civil. This is a power seeker, and not in anyone's best interest to hire.

Of course you don't want to waste your staff's time on a loser, and you can't always tell from the paper resume nor from the letters of recommendation. Instead, you might alert staff that you may be asking them to drop in within the next half hour or so. You'll send for them, if the candidate looks like a possibility.

Be sure, after your staff members leave, that you bring up salary and benefits so that she doesn't have to, and see if she has the good sense not to ask about personal time and taking classes or being off when her child is sick. Beware of candidates whose questions have to do with your upper hierarchy rather than with the job for which they are applying. This is usually a bad sign.

Even if you really like the candidate, be sure to call her references. There is more than one sad story of a school district who skipped over these calls, hired a superintendent, and did not have to live long to rue it.[9]

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[9] Always a silver lining: some of these failures have given rise to a new field of consultant expertise and income for professors:

These calls must be made, and they must also be taken with that familiar grain of salt. If the candidate has been bad news, her current employer may lie to be gracefully rid of her. If the candidate has come out of a particular graduate program, some professors will embellish her abilities in order to polish their own departmental reputation. Your best bet is an earlier employer who no longer has any vested interest in the candidate's career. If this is not a possibility, you must rely on listening, not just to the words but to the tone. Is the praise faint? Enthusiastic? Too eager? When you inquire about specifics, are the answers direct or vague and evasive?

During the interview, if this candidate seems to be someone you really want, remember your own interviews. Remember how you, as a candidate, were taking stock of the interviewer and her office. During the interview, in addition to your charming manner, be sure she has an opportunity to ask questions, and if she does not, don't make her feel uncomfortable about it. This is particularly true for staff authority positions; they are unique, and one who has not filled this kind of position may honestly not know what to ask and knows she doesn't know.

Show her around the office or school. If you have made up your mind about him and must still proceed up through a hierarchy where interviews are real and not token, make the appointment with the next step up before she leaves.

If you have taken all the wise steps and put to work your finest judgment, both professional and intuitive, and you find you have hired a lemon or a

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heading up the superintendent (and in some cases, assistant superintendent or principal) search committee.

monster, start documenting even if there are "temporary" or "one-year" provisions in your system. Don't leave firing to chance. And do not be too depressed. It is very disappointing to make a wrong choice in hiring. But you are not alone. We all make an occasional mistake, even after years of experience.[10]

Committee Power

Some people believe, in all corporate worlds, that to be named to a committee is a small power victory. Education harbors a glut of committees, no matter what area of education you have chosen. We would like to suggest that there is no power in being on a committee unless you are a power within that committee. If you are simply one of the nodding silent majority, your being on the committee is draining away your time, and we all know that time in itself is power, since you use it to carry out self-enhancing activities.

You do not have to be the highest ranking person on the committee to be a power on it. How you act and what you say is much more significant. What you say before the meeting itself can be significant. If you know other people who are on the committee, contrive to chat with them briefly (and individually). You may wish only to make a social point, e.g., "I understand I'll see you at the Basket Weaving Committee tomorrow," reaffirming your rapport with each member.

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[10] One of the authors was sure she had found the perfect candidate. He was friendly, humorous, knowledgeable, energetic. But the job had a devastating effect on him: in six months he became Napoleon, a male chauvinist, and a skilled saboteur who was dislodged only with considerable effort (and some self-serving "embellishments" to his next employer).

You may wish to test the waters, subtly, of course. "I wasn't too surprised that they've called a committee about this issue. Were you?" or "Have you given any thought to this Basket Weaving requirement they're proposing?" Of course, if you're talking to a real power player, she will be vague, not wanting to give away her position so soon. Nor will you!

If the issue to be discussed is one of which you have only general knowledge, you would be wise to invite along (and notify the committee organizer, if needed) someone on your staff who has working, technical expertise on the topic. It is a given that there will be some people on the committee who do have expertise. If they do, and you don't, they can have you nodding silently for their own agenda in no time, and you may find that it is not an agenda you really want.

The same holds true if you call the committee meeting. If it deals with a specific area of service or program, don't allow yourself to be dazzled by the prospect of being "Chairperson." Power and satisfactory outcome, not glory, is what you want from that committee. Let your expert chair it. She will answer to you, anyway, she will enjoy the prestige, and she much better than you will be able to field comments and steer discussion.

If you do not know anyone on the committee, arrive a few minutes early so that you can select a chair where you feel and look comfortable. Perched or crowded in are not the look of power. Corporate business management would have us believe that the chair to the left of the chairman is the "power seat." The authors have seen power blossom in various places around the room, but always from around the table, never from the sofa or easy chair over against the wall.

If there are refreshments, leave your belongings not on the table where they can be shoved aside, but in the chair you plan to occupy. If someone pushes your belongings a ways down the table, it can be claimed "accidental." If someone picks your things up and puts them someplace else, it was deliberate and you can nail him appropriately with a bit of glacial grace.[11] With your chair staked out, you can then approach the refreshment table and see who might be willing to chat, creating a fragile yet tangible early rapport.

If you are chairing a committee, make a real effort to know who is on it and introduce them yourself. It makes each of them feel more important, and it puts you firmly in charge. If you are simply attending the meeting, as you know, it is often the custom for the chairman to ask the members to introduce themselves It is all too often the custom, as the task plods around the table, for each member to rush out a modest mumble and whip his head around to the next person, as if to say, "You're on."

You *are* on. Do not mumble. Do not rush. This split second is yours, and you must make the most of it. In a clear but not clarion voice, with a confident smile and gracious manner, state your name and your title. As you do so, make eye contact around the table, ending with the chairman, not the person next to you. Then turn to the next in line.

Why bother? Because this is the committee's first impression of you. Your socializing at the refreshment table was one thing, but now you are in place as a "committee member." As the committee work gets underway, people whom you want to persuade have unconsciously formed some opinion about you. If salesmen are told that they have 30 seconds to "hook" a customer, and public speakers are told that they have 30 seconds to get the attention of their audience, then you have just the right amount of time to make the right impression on the committee.

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[11] Don't make a federal case of it, but don't just "let it go"; that could start you off in a position of weakness.

As the committee discussion gets underway, be aware that you are still visible. When you agree with what is being said, nod slightly, keep your eye on the speaker, even squint just slightly as if your brain were busy processing, or jot down a note and underline it. But don't smile, and don't fidget. Neither is a power gesture.

When you disagree with what is being said, lean back, look down, shake your head slightly. If you have the power to get away with it, when you really disagree, drop your pencil with delicate disgust on the table. There will most assuredly be, on the committee, members looking to see what they should think. The more important you are within the structure, the more likely they will be looking to you for cues.

Committees can be disastrously time-consuming. There is a rule that we have discovered, and perhaps you have, too. Committees can react, but they cannot generate. They need a starting point and an agenda. They need a suggested draft, or a list of issues, or something concrete on which to base the discussion. Otherwise, everyone's favorite hobby horse will get ridden across long hours of polemic, and nothing will get done.

If you are chairing the committee, of course you have a neat stack of copies of material for committee consideration, discussion, and alteration, a "starting point" you will be quick to say, lest the committee think it is just a rubber stamp. But if you are a committee member and the chairman has naively planned for the committee to "generate," as discussion bogs down, and it will, you can make the motion to the chairman that a small ad hoc committee be formed to draft a "starting point" for further discussion. The entire committee will be grateful.

If the issue is of real concern to you, you will be the first to volunteer for the *ad hoc* committee. If you don't wish to spend time on it, mention in your early motion, "I would like serve on it myself but I have to be out of the building/out of town/at a conference/at the hospital with my child all next week." Of course you would not commit the *faux pas* of saying "I'm so busy." Everyone on the committee likes to think he/she is busy. And if you mention it at once, you will not be cornered into the very weak position of having suggested a committee and then declining to serve on it.

When the meeting ends, you will of course take a minute to speak to the chairman and burble some pleasantry about the merit of the meeting. If the chairman is someone so high in the hierarchy that you hesitate to approach him/her directly, make your remarks audible to those sitting beside you as you gather your belongings. It will be appreciated. Committee chairs often harbor a lurking suspicion that members feel the meeting was a waste of time.

If you have chaired the committee, you have of course thanked one and all for their time, and if the committee is to meet again, that date will be set now, not later, even if it is next month and a reminder must be sent out. You will also have the minutes/draft sent out several days before the next meeting. Most members will not have read it, and some will forget to bring it along, but the courtesy will be appreciated and you will have given the impression, sincere or not, that you are truly open to committee recommendations and decisions.

If you have already made up your mind about an issue and have the authority to move in the direction you desire, don't bother with a committee, because once you do, you cannot bury its recommendations, at least not without doing serious damage to your credibility and therefore to your power. This is probably one of the most commonly violated principles in education. It is probably one reason why teachers are so unwilling to serve on committees. They meet, they spend time, they consider the issues in good faith, only to find that the chair already had her mind made up about what the committee would "decide" and that the whole point of the committee was simply to create the excuse, "Well, this was decided by a faculty committee." An administrator who plays this game even once diminishes her power, because she has shot a large hole in her own credibility. Yet, it happens all the time.

War Power

From time to time, even in the corporate world of education, you as an administrator may find yourself either invited to a war or embroiled in one. Let it be said that you would be wise to avoid starting one. There are many ways to achieve your goals, and of all of them, war is the least advisable. Like lawsuits and love affairs, the outcome cannot always be controlled and does not always follow the path of logic.

Let it next be said that if you find yourself in a war, go in it to win. Some management experts advise that part of power is not winning all the time. We disagree. Perhaps men can afford to lose a few battles,[12] but certainly women administrators cannot afford many losses, and they can suffer major damage with even one loss.

If you are going to war, be sure it is worth it. If you are going to marshal your forces and display your power, make sure that the victory will be something substantial. Remember that if you go to war, you must commit totally to it and not abandon the field after the first few volleys. As you wage your war, some of your "hidden" power artillery will be brought to public view, so if you lose, you will have given away some of your former advantages. People will know what to expect. People will have seen beneath the camouflage and know better where to attack next time.

As you have acquired more power, you may be approached, by an individual on behalf of herself or on behalf of a group, to join in a war. *Be very careful!* Be especially wary of the individual who describes to you some great injustice, some inexcusable situation, some unacceptable behavior, whipping you into a froth of righteous indignation. You agree, this must be stopped, this must not be tolerated. You take up your arms, you prepare for battle, you sound the first trumpets, only to find that the inciter has turned tail. "Oh no, she's exaggerating. I never thought it was a serious problem."[13]

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[12] Perhaps due to the phenomenon mentioned earlier that incompetent men are not only tolerated, but not infrequently promoted.

[13] It's that fellow from *The Caine Mutiny* once again, and he seems to exist everywhere. Even both authors have been caught out on a limb because of him. But not twice! We hope you won't be out there even once.

You can, of course, assess this invitation to war in purely Machiavellian terms. If, in the first place, it is a war you know is going on and not some fanciful delusion of a pot-stirrer, you may think it is to your advantage to join in. You may have a philosophical reason for joining one side or the other. However, if it is purely political, because for you the stakes could be truly worthwhile, you might wish to heed the old Italian: Side always with the weaker, for together you can overcome the stronger, and once the stronger is conquered, you can always turn on the weaker with your victory assured.

Unfortunately, since you are a woman, there will be those who perceive *you* as "the weaker," so even though you evade other people's wars and start none of your own, you may find yourself in one anyway. We repeat, fight to win.

Administrative war is waged at below freezing temperatures. Facts, figures, friends who bear witness, logic, data, and steely determination are the weapons. Let the men scream and turn red in the face. Let the men pound the table. Let the men slam the doors.[14] This is not the time for you to be a woman; war is for warriors.

What are warriors like? They have studied the opponent and know his weaknesses. They have called in those allies who can be of assistance and stocked the arsenal well, with supply lines for further ammunition (facts, figures, data) if needed. They are ruthless and use any weapon at hand.[15] They are tireless and keep up the attack until mortally wounded. Even then, they may try to land a few deathblows.

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[14] All cases in point from the authors' "travels". We have found that the highest echelons hate these displays, even though they do not always rule against the displayers.

If they lose? They go on with their careers, wounded but wiser. All warriors bear a few scars. If they win? They occupy their new territory immediately. They consolidate their gains and carry off the loot. They give the enemy no chance to regroup and sneak back under cover of darkness. Nor do they let loose a flock of white doves. If a rival has gone so far as to declare war against you, that relationship can never be repaired, and don't let him think for a minute that it can be. In your victory, you will be too professional to indulge yourself in a blood bath of the victims. But never will you invite them over to the castle for a banquet.

Wars are unpleasant. They leave hard feelings. They do damage to reputations and professional relationships. But if you win, nothing increases your power quite as much as victory in combat.

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[15] Malicious gossip, incidentally, is not a weapon. "How would you know, you're so busy screwing the school nurse!" is absolutely taboo, no matter how true, no matter how tempting.

Chapter 10

Ever Upward

Once you are firmly attached to a flagpole, and having spent a minimum of two years in your position, it is natural to consider moving on up so that you have fewer feet in your face and a better view of the landscape. Perhaps an opportunity opens up that is too good not to consider, or perhaps you feel that you want to look for some "better" opportunity. Again, it is decision time.

The View from Further Up

The corporate world of education differs from other corporate worlds in that almost every move up involves a significant change of focus. It is not "more of the same thing." It is more of different things.

If, for example, you are an assistant principal for student services, as principal you will need to deal not only with student services but instruction, teacher performance, maintenance, community relations, district paperwork, and finance. If you are an assistant superintendent for instruction, as superintendent you will deal very little with instruction. Someone else will have to be in charge, because building funds and budgets and administrative procedures and community support and school board relations will take up most of your time. If you are a language arts supervisor and move into instructional administration, all you have learned and know about teaching reading and writing will be only a small part of your concerns as you take on all those other subject areas, K-12, as well as the people who teach them.

If you aspire to a position higher on the flagpole, look carefully at the shift of focus that you will encounter in the upward climb. Just as you made a serious self-assessment long ago when you decided that yes, you wanted to be an administrator, make sure that this expanded or shifted focus is what you want. It is a wise woman who knows when she is well off.

Changing Flagpoles

When you have become well established, comfortably girded with power, and widely networked, you may arrive at the crossroads of another decision that is not necessarily climbing further up the flagpole but changing flagpoles for reasons other than a higher position. Is it time to move on? Corporate business management tell us that after five years you have accomplished what you can do and henceforth will only be marking time.

In the ever-changing world of education, we question that five-year statute of limitations. Programs and directions mature more slowly and the fruits are not so quickly harvested.

Or perhaps you feel you need a change because as a professional and an administrator, you feel you have ceased to grow. It may be that you have indeed contributed as much as you can to that position and could leave it in good shape for someone else. Or you may realize that, as a woman, your particular administrative hierarchy is going to keep you forever in middle management, taking you for granted, letting you rock along towards the path of "good old Betsy," (read "Dobbin"), an old-timey if somewhat out-dated fixture. Or perhaps you are simply on a small flagpole that was fine as a start, but you now aspire to a larger one where the salary is better and the working environment more to your taste, so a lateral move would still be, in that sense, a step up.

If conditions on your flagpole have changed and not for the better, you may need to move on. It is a fact of life that "things" never stay the same. The district you once assessed as sound may have taken an economic turn for the worse, or fallen into a political turmoil. Perhaps new school board members have come in with the mission to fire the superintendent. That is not unique, and whether the campaign is justified or simply a product of personal pique and politics, such districts can become very unsettling, unpleasant work environments.

Right job, wrong boss

One of the most common reasons for leaving a position is that you find yourself irrevocably at odds with your immediate superior. It may be the superior who initially hired you and whom you grossly misjudged as to his character. It may be that same superior who was very compatible until he fell on hard times in his personal life, e.g., a drinking problem or a nasty divorce, and he is not the same boss he used to be. It may be that your superior wanted to climb further up the flagpole and discovered that he, too, was just another "Dobbin" who would never be promoted. That is dismaying for anyone, but for men, expected by society to "succeed," it can be devastating. And so can the effects on the work environment.

More frequently, however, this superior has replaced your original boss. Perhaps some of the problems are due to clumsy administration rather than deliberate malice. If so, they can be worked out through frank but gracious communication. If, however, such attempts result only in a repeat of the problem, perhaps this person is incapable of good administration. Or perhaps you have encountered a case of deliberate malice. It happens, and not only to women.

If you have been very successful, he (or she) may decide you are a threat and deliberately attempt to undermine you. If you have a higher degree than he does, he may take every opportunity to vent his resentment, or perhaps he is just a chauvinist -- or perhaps she is deluded by corporate wisdom into thinking that disagreeable, autocratic and unpredictable equals "tough."

What are the danger signs that refuse to yield to open communication? One is that he (or she -- not all women administrators are swell) continues to deal directly with your subordinates without either informing, including, or consulting you. This behavior has only one purpose: to undermine your authority. This man (or woman) allows your staff to come with their complaints and then censures you without waiting to hear first your side, much less without insisting the complainer bring you to any discussion of the complaint. This man (or woman) calls in members of your staff to discuss with them their work, particularly some new development in that work, without including you. Usually this man (or woman) will himself be adamant that you never jump channels over him, because he (she) knows how much damage can be done, how much power can be sapped by the ploy. That is why he's doing it to you. Nor can you depend on your staff loyally refusing to jump past you. A few will not. A few will keep you informed or request that you come along. But others will find it simply too convenient to have one less approval in their path.

It is probably a case of deliberate malice if this new superior takes pleasure in beckoning you out on a limb only to leave you hanging there. The general method for this is to present you with some new project that is "top priority," wait until you are well into its development, then cancel the whole thing. You have lost time, and being canceled out shows you to be a person without the power to pursue a project already undertaken. If he is really malicious, he will make this project a cooperative one with some other department, school, district, office so that, when you are suddenly told you must no longer work on it, others who have depended on your help will see you are either powerless or unreliable. You are then faced with the choice of badmouthing your superior to that office and/or continuing the work but on your own time and /or conceding the battle and looking jut as bad as your boss intended. Your image, no matter how good, can not survive many such fiascoes.

Another warning of deliberate malice is that he (or she) hands you a project that appears to be very difficult, but you plunge in and get the ship afloat. At that point, he (or she) will take it over himself, exclude you all together, and perhaps eventually appoint one of your staff members to assist him (her).

Or perhaps this new superior does not bother with subtleties. Perhaps he (or she) is content to be impossible, making a major crisis over some small detail, such as a copy of a letter that you have already given him. One woman administrator of our acquaintance returned from a prestigious national meeting where she had been invited to speak to be faced by a furious boss berating her for just that bit of trivia: he had been unable to find a copy of a memo in his files. Obviously, that was not the root of his anger, since he had a secretary and so did she, and either of them could have generated a copy. The problem was malice; the root was envy. No one ever invited him to speak anywhere.

There is no remedy for this situation. Your immediate superior who is taking daily potshots at you is standing too close not to score a few bulls-eyes. Stay around too long, and he will shred your professional reputation. Treading water in the hope that surely his superiors will notice his tyranny and put a stop to it will probably eventually drown you. Normally, those who put him in that position are very unlikely to admit their mistake, even if they do know about it.

They may not know about it. As with the lady superintendent, they too suffer the problem that no one tells them the truth. The malicious boss is not necessarily a stupid man. One administrator of our acquaintance used to change the personnel evaluations to lower ratings after the staff member had signed them. Another, when staff members refused to sign, had a friend forge the signature. Surely these "victims" wondered why the "next man up" never called them in to question why they had refused to sign the evaluation. He never called them because he never knew.

Your chances of organizing the overthrow of this malicious and/or incompetent administrator are minimal. If this man is the unit head (school, district, or agency office), and you are second in command, your chances are even worse. Both authors have seen many cases in which a *coup d'etat* was attempted, (man against man) and in many of these cases there were overwhelming, documented grounds of misconduct and mismanagement.

We have seen not one case where the attempt was successful.

Let us be realistic. As a woman, you have even less chance. The men who tried it saw their careers go down in flames. "Troublemakers," that was the label. What could be more predictable in a woman than to be a whiny little emotion-ridden troublemaker? Of course you don't whine! But potential employers don't know that.

Our recommendation: Find a new flagpole.

Reaching for the Flag

Do you really want that top job? Is your personal life structured so that you can handle it? The top jobs are very demanding, and they are a fishbowl with the entire local educational community ringed about watching you. Are you going to reach for the flag for all those good reasons that got you into administration in the first place, with freshness and enthusiasm and a wellspring of ideas you would like to implement? Raise your head and take a look up there.

We know principals who decided not to press on to the district office, and other that turned down offers of immediate superintendancy. We know assistant superintendents who decided that the superintendancy, as one put it, "is a road that gets shorter all the time, and always ends in crucifixion."[1] We even know two superintendents who turned down handsome offers of financial and political support to run for the state superintendancy. Their decision was to stay where they were on the flagpole with a well established grip in a good working environment.

On the other hand, we know former teachers and consultants and program managers and assistant principals and assistant superintendents who have finally climbed to the top, the top of the school or the top of the district or even the top of a state. They are at last, with great satisfaction, doing things their way.

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[1] They refer to the astonishing decrease in "average tenure" of school district superintendents, due in large part to conflicts with school boards who want to extend their power beyond setting policy and move into administrative decisions.

There is much to be said to be free of the frustrations of middle management and the limitations imposed by any lack of vision above you. There is power at the top, and power, especially when used for a true mission such as education, is a reward in itself.

Your choice

Before you decide to move on or move up, consider for a moment that the view from a ways up the flagpole can be very pleasant. Many educators spend a rich, fulfilling lifetime career just partway up that pole. Then again, you may want the flag in your hand and are more than willing to pay the price. The choice, as a successful woman administrator, is yours.

Whatever you decide, we wish you a flagpole of pure gold and a flag that waves proudly forever.

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